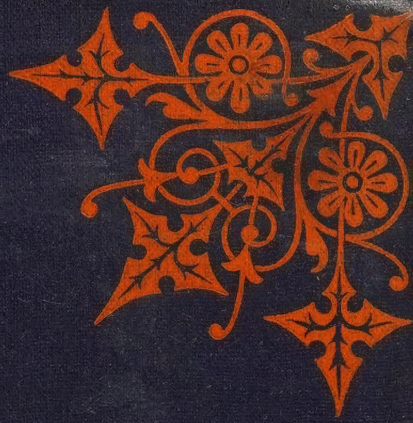

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THE UNDERGRADUATE

A Sketch

BY

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AUTHOR OF

"GIRALDI; OR, THE CURSE OF LOVE"

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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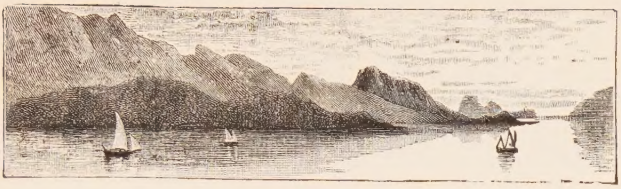

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THE UNDERGRADUATE

CHAPTER I.

NO COCKLEY BECK AFTER ALL.

GUY MILLER — simple - minded, inexperienced, and very young — passed the following morning in a state of not altogether unpleasant perturbation. He avoided Cecil, lest that mocking youth should, perchance, inquire what he was going to do with himself during the afternoon; read persistently for a couple of hours, and then attended a lecture at Cardinal; lunched alone in his own

rooms, and fell a-smoking vigorously over a French novel. Certainly the position in which he was placed was a very peculiar one. It seemed to him as though he were being actually stalked down, and that if things went on at this rate much longer he would sooner or later find himself at bay. What was he to do—double upon his pursuer, or turn and surrender at discretion? As for Mrs. Pottifer herself, he scarcely knew what to think of her. That she was attractive in many ways was true enough, though he was far, very far, from having fallen victim to her charms. That she had, unfortunately, conceived a certain *penchant* for himself—Guy never used a stronger term than this — was also undeniable. This he could endure, could carry off, so to speak, by the aid of careful diplomacy; but now things were looking more serious.

Then he tried to fancy himself in love with her; tried hard and honestly. It was no good. He knew perfectly well that he cared more for his friend Cecil than for all the matrons in creation. The fair Ianthe amused him a little, flattered him a little, interested him a little, and occasionally bored him a little; and that was the whole of the feelings with which she had inspired him. And yet she was hunting him like this. Heigh-ho!

It was a warm, still, golden afternoon, bright and genial, such as seldom comes to us during the month of May, when poor Guy, feeling perhaps more thoroughly uncomfortable than ever in his life before, dipped his oars into the stream, with Mrs. Pottifer facing him at the rudder. Nothing could be imagined more exhilarating than the spectacle around them;

it was life in one of its liveliest and most joyous aspects. The river was full of boats, and sparkled merrily in the sunshine; for the brilliant weather had tempted numbers of men to don their flannels, and the scene that afternoon was unusually gay. This was a distinct relief to Guy, who felt that some protection was thereby vouchsafed to him; while the fair Ianthe, steering deftly through the throng of fragile craft which surrounded them on all sides, sat, silent and absorbed, the picture of calm content.

In a few minutes the sensation of nervousness which had at first oppressed him became somewhat mitigated, so that he felt more at his ease. He pulled vigorously, and enjoyed the exercise; then it struck him that their silence had perhaps lasted long enough, and that it might

be as well to make a remark or two. So he said, in a cheerful tone:

"Do you like this?"

"My happiness is intense," replied Ianthe; and spoke no more.

Guy felt instinctively that he had made a bad shot, and began to pull with increased energy. Just then a punt, carrying a fresher who was new to the business, swung heavily round, and, catching them in the stern, administered a jerk to the seat occupied by Mrs. Pottifer, which startled her, for the moment, out of her reverie. The culprit sang out confused apologies, and seemed really distressed at the accident; but Guy felt absolutely grateful to him, and shouted cheerily back to him that there was no harm done. Nor, in fact, did Ianthe seem to mind it very much; for the moment afterwards she looked straight across at

Guy, and said, with a smile in her violet eyes that might have meant anything or nothing :

" It will be all right as soon as we are clear of all these boats."

This, of course, was precisely what Guy most dreaded. He looked upon the boats as his best defenders, and fervently wished that they might find the whole river as full of them as the part of it they were now in. Ianthe's words sobered him at once. Unconsciously he began to pull very much more slowly, and, as he did so, cast about in his mind for a remark which might help to turn the conversation into a safer channel. For some minutes nothing came ; at last, judging that the very silence of his companion had a possible menace in it, and that the sooner her train of thought were interrupted the better, he suddenly exclaimed :

"What a pity the Professor wasn't well enough to come with us!"

Ianthe winced visibly.

"How kind of you to say so!" she replied.

Of course she meant to acknowledge Guy's thoughtfulness for her husband's pleasure; it would have been unpardonable to attach any other meaning to her words. It was no doubt due to Guy's own morbid fancy that her accent seemed to denote a sense of pique, and that her eyes shot that reproachful look at him.

Guy bent to his oars again, his lithe young figure showing to its best advantage as he swayed backwards and forwards in a measured rhythmic movement, and the breeze played fitfully with his auburn curls. He felt that his flannel shirt had fallen open at the throat, and wanted very much to button it again; but he was too nervous

to stop rowing, and the consciousness that Ianthe was gazing at him from under her dark eyelashes filled him with additional confusion. On they went at a steady, swinging pace for three or four hundred yards, and the boats around them began to thin ominously. Things were getting dangerous ; was there no help forthcoming ? Guy set his teeth hard, tilted his straw hat over his eyes, assumed a thoughtful frown, and gazed meditatively at the hills which rose upon the horizon to his right.

Ten minutes more passed ; only four boats were now to be seen, and none of them within hail. Nothing was heard but the plashing of Guy's oars, and the light ripple of the water against the sides. Then—it came.

"Why *won't* you look at me ?" said Ianthe.

Guy coloured furiously, but preserved his composure. He smiled, and looked straight at Ianthe in return. There was no mistaking the expression of her face. But he struck one more feeble blow by way of parrying hers.

"Did you think I was purposely avoiding you?" he said lightly.

Ianthe made no reply. Two minutes later they arrived at a point where there was a narrowish inlet, parting off from the main stream, the banks of which were of moderate height and covered with thick grass. And there was no other boat in sight.

"Suppose we land here," said Ianthe almost inaudibly.

Guy pulled ashore, tethered the boat to the trunk of an over-hanging tree, stepped on to the bank, and helped her out.

"We are still a quarter of a mile from

Cockley Beck," he remarked, as they reached the top, in rather a hesitating voice.

It was of no use. A condemned criminal might as well have tried to escape hanging after the halter had been put round his neck, by telling the hangman that it was a fine day. Ianthe seated herself on the grassy bank without deigning to reply, and of course he sat down beside her.

A pause, which to Guy seemed like an hour. His eyes were fixed upon the water beneath their feet, and with one hand he plucked up the grass beside him nervously. He felt Ianthe's gaze upon him, steadfast and immovable, and his heart beat wildly in his distress. What was coming? What was the strange experience in store for him?

His suspense did not last long. The next moment Ianthe spoke.

"Mr. Miller," she said very gently, "I have brought you here because there is something I *must* say to you. Surely you must know it already. Haven't you seen that I love you?"

Now, Guy had had a foreboding that something queer was going to occur. He had been dimly conscious that Ianthe was fond of him, and had thought it very likely that a *tête-à-tête* upon the river might be fraught with some slightly embarrassing episodes. But this sudden, simple, terrible declaration disconcerted him beyond measure. He was not prepared for it; and he felt bewildered — helpless — disarmed.

"You cannot have been unconscious of it," continued Ianthe, in her low, clear voice. "You must have seen it. I have loved you ever since we first met. I feel towards you as I have never felt towards

anyone else; I love you as I can never love any other person in the world. I cannot describe my feelings properly—they are beyond any words of mine. But I love you utterly; my entire heart is yours."

"Is this really true?" said Guy, in a choking voice.

"True? You cannot doubt it," replied Ianthe. "Should I make such an avowal if it were not true? I have been a different creature since you came into my life. You have brought into it what never was there before—sunshine, beauty, the deepest and intensest happiness. Every day that I do not see you is a day lost—a blank. You fill my thoughts. I seem to live only when you are with me. Didn't you see how overjoyed I was when you came to see me yesterday? Do you think I have ever experienced such delight

as now—now, sitting all alone with you upon this bank, and telling you all this? I don't know whether you care for me at all; perhaps you don't, but——"

What happened at this juncture Guy never could remember with anything like exactitude. But the next moment he found his left arm over her neck, while she, jerking her head away from his with a sudden gesture, put out her right hand as though to keep him off, her breath coming short and quick.

"No!" she panted in a half-whisper. "Not that—not that! I will still be loyal to my husband—for I do love my husband, Guy, though not as I love you. Don't think I wouldn't like to kiss you. Ah, if I only might! If I only dared! No—you mustn't tempt me again. You do love me too, don't you?"

What, under such circumstances, could

Guy do but swear to her that she was the only woman who had ever touched his heart? He did swear it to her, though it cost him a painful effort. He swore to her that his love was as great as hers. And Ianthe clutched at the assurance.

"I only wanted that to complete my happiness," she said quietly, her eyes shining. "And yet, and yet—how sad it all is! Oh, Guy, I have spoilt your life! Why did we ever meet? We love, and yet we can never be any more to each other than we are now. That is a bitter drop in the cup of both of us. There is nothing —nothing—I wouldn't do to make you happy. Try not to be very sad—for my sake. But you have made me so happy, while I have spoilt your life!"

Now, Guy had his wits sufficiently about him to know perfectly well that she had done no such thing. She had not spoilt

his life, and she had not made him sad; yet both propositions would have been undeniable if what he had just assured her of had been true—if indeed he loved her as much as she loved him. But then it wasn't true, and he was conscious of the fact. However, he could scarcely tell her so to her face.

"You mustn't take such a gloomy view as that," he said, gently. "Try and look upon the brighter side of it. Let us enjoy what opportunities we have—this one, for instance. Can't you be happy with me here and now, without troubling yourself about the future?"

"You dear boy!" exclaimed Ianthe, with a smile. She played with his clustering hair, and then he caught her hand laughingly in his, and they held each other close. "Come, we haven't many minutes left; let us make the most of them. Don't

misunderstand me; I would kiss you, Guy, were it not that I wish to meet my husband with a clear conscience. I can't help loving you, you know; why have you made me love you so?—but I will never do anything that would not be right."

Then she stroked his cheek. "I should like always to stroke you the right way," she said, caressingly. Two minutes afterwards the sun sank behind the hills, and Guy rose from his seat the accepted lover of a married woman.

They strolled three or four times up and down the bank before re-entering the boat. A little copse of nut-trees lay on one side of them, while beyond it were some fragrant bean-fields, which sent forth a delightful odour. All Ianthe's sadness seemed to have left her, and she gave herself up for some time entirely to the joys of the situation.

"Just one turn more," she pleaded, as they came to the end of the path. "Yes, your advice is good. We will be happy while we can; the future may take care of itself. And I *am* happy—so happy—when I am with you. I am in love with you, Guy, though I won't—I mean I mayn't—kiss you. But I will hold your hand, and squeeze it, and, O Guy, when you marry, if ever you do marry, I will give my blessing to your wife."

"Dear, we will not talk about the future," said Guy.

"I wish I couldn't think about it," murmured Ianthe. "The idea haunts me that I have spoilt your life. It will be harder for you than for me. But don't be sad—try not to be sad, for my sake. You will try, won't you, dear?"

"I am thinking more of you," he replied, with unquestionable honesty this

time. Troubled and bewildered he was, but scarcely sad. "The fact is," he continued, plucking up courage, "you ought to take a diametrically opposite view of the situation. There is an insuperable obstacle between us—that we know; and we must just make up our minds to the inevitable. But instead of dwelling upon it, don't you think the truer and wiser course would be to cultivate a feeling of joy and thankfulness that over and above all that we have possessed in life hitherto, we have now the knowledge of our mutual love? That in itself is surely a great gain, and we ought to extract all the happiness possible from it without letting ourselves be saddened by the thought that it can never go any further. Isn't that a better philosophy than yours?"

He looked very grave and very sweet as he said this. Ianthe was silent for a

moment or two; then suddenly looked up with her eyes full of tears, and said, in a half-whisper:

"Thank you—oh, thank you so much! I cannot tell you how much you have helped me. I bless the day when we first met. Ah, this makes life worth living!"

At last he helped her down the bank, put her into the boat, and once more dipped his oars. He was no longer nervous. The dreaded ordeal had come and gone; he knew the worst, and his experience, though eminently perplexing, had not been wholly disagreeable. They did not talk very much upon their homeward journey. Ianthe sat quietly enough, her eyes full of suppressed love, steering—a comparatively easy task now that the river was deserted; while Guy rowed steadily on, meeting her gaze with a frank, open smile, and uttering a word or two ever and

anon which seemed to afford her the very keenest pleasure.

"We never got to Cockley Beck after all, you see," he said, laughing, as they passed the Willows.

"That will do for another day," smiled Ianthe, with much foresight.

"Do you love me as much as you did when we passed here an hour ago?" said Guy, in a lower voice, as he leant forward.

"More! infinitely more!" replied Ianthe. "I shall never forget this afternoon."

"Nor I," he rejoined; and no other word was spoken until they reached the boat-house. Then they landed, and walked rapidly through the darkening streets until they came to the Professor's house. It was neither the time nor the place for a lingering adieu. They only clasped hands silently, exchanged one look, and parted.

* * * * *

Guy made the best of his way back with his head in a whirl. It seemed ten years since he had left the College that afternoon and trodden that very road. So this, he thought, was being in love. He didn't know before, but he knew now. It did not occur to him to doubt the reality of his own feelings. Of course he was in love; wasn't he Ianthe's lover? But he wished, with a sense of amused irritation, that she had not harped so continuously upon the idea of his supposed misery. He was not miserable at all; only a little anxious, perhaps, and very, very much bewildered. And he could not bring himself to see that his life was spoilt. Why should it be? Yet it ought, somehow, if he were really in love with Ianthe. Well, he didn't know; perhaps it was, only he was not properly conscious of it. Then the thought of her love for him rose up in his heart.

and touched him deeply. About her there was no doubt. And what would her future life be like ?

He gained his College, had a 'smug tea' all alone in his rooms, smoked three pipes, and then undressed. The events of the afternoon pressed upon his brain like a physical weight, and he felt almost like a sleeping man in a nightmare. He went to bed an hour earlier than usual, but never closed his eyes all night.

CHAPTER II.

COMPLICATIONS.

Guy parried as best he could the inquiries of Cecil as to what he had done with himself the previous afternoon. Night had brought neither counsel nor refreshment with it, and the whole of the succeeding day he remained taciturn and nervous, wondering whether he ought to go and see Ianthe again, or whether etiquette demanded more reserve, at any rate for a day or two. While in this state of uncertainty, another man, passing his door shortly after lunch, proposed a walk as far as Burghsley; and Guy clutched at

the proposal, as cutting the knot of his embarrassment.

The two strolled countrywards at a rapid pace, passing through the slummy outskirts of the town, and making good time as they approached their destination. Guy's companion was of a political turn of mind, and Guy, eager to clear his thoughts of the unaccustomed weight which oppressed them, threw himself ardently into a discussion upon the respective claims of capital and labour. How fresh the subject was to him, how it cleared and invigorated his brain, how wholesome seemed the intellectual exercise after the unhealthy atmosphere he had been breathing! His life spoilt? Yes, it might indeed be spoilt, if it were to consist in a series of excursions to Cockley Beck with Mrs. Pottifer. But hitherto no serious injury had been done. He was

heart-whole, heart-free. And there was no doubt that the dispute between capital and labour was a most interesting problem. The man who should solve that problem would be one of the greatest benefactors of his species the world ever saw. In fact, there was no reason why he shouldn't take it up, and devote his life to it. Only in the meantime, how about Ianthe?

At last they turned, and Guy thought he might go into the Parks on their way back, and rest a bit. The other said he would go on, as he had an engagement to tea at Brecknock; so they parted, and Guy was once more left alone to face whatever dangers might befall him. And sure enough, sitting by herself on a bench down close by the water's edge, under a spreading tree, was the woman herself.

A bright flush of delight sprang into her face as he approached, and her eyes shone

visibly. Guy's heart gave a great throb, and then he raised his hat and smiled. A moment after he was seated on the bench beside her, and her face had paled again.

"You're not looking well," he said, noticing her change of colour.

"I never slept all night," she replied.

"Didn't you really?" said Guy, opening his eyes. "No more did I!"

"I don't think it's to be wondered at," she answered, in a subdued voice. "I feel as though I had died and come to life again—a blessed life, but reached only through a process almost as painful as death. The whole thing is so strange, you know; such a mixture of joy and sorrow; and both spring from the same cause,—Guy!"

"Yes," returned Guy, beginning to feel sentimental.

"Are you *very* unhappy?"

"I try not to be," said Guy, blushing. "But I confess that I have been thinking more of you than of myself."

"Dear boy! How unselfish of you!" murmured Ianthe. "What will be the end of it all, I wonder? Life is very, very difficult. I long to do so many things that I can't—I daren't. They would be so disloyal to my husband, you know; and I never will be disloyal to him, even in thought. Guy—promise that you'll always be faithful to me!"

"Can you doubt it?" answered Guy, his fingers closing over hers.

"It would hurt me if you were to marry," she continued. "Then there would be two between us; now there is only one. But don't think I mean by that to speak slightingly of my husband; he is so fond of me, and, in his way, so very,

very good to me. By-the-bye, you know, I've told him all about it."

"Told your husband!" exclaimed Guy, roused and interested for the first time. "What have you told him?"

"I've told him," said Ianthe, speaking very slowly and deliberately, "that I liked you very, very much; that I was awfully fond of you; that I felt towards you quite differently from anybody else in the world; and that there was nothing I enjoyed so much as going for a walk with you—except rowing."

"And what did he say?" asked Guy, breathless.

"Something about earthquakes, I think," returned Ianthe; "he was a little preoccupied at the moment, and didn't quite take it in. Then he said that if I liked walking or rowing with you, he didn't mind, only I was to be careful not to get

myself talked about. I think he likes you too, Guy; I've heard him say myself that you might do something in the world, if you cared to take the trouble."

"Well, I'm glad he takes it so easily," remarked Guy, feeling by no means very much at ease himself. "We've nothing much to reproach ourselves with, if he knows all and doesn't mind."

Ianthe glanced up quickly. "Guy," she said, "do you think there is anything wrong in our relations?"

"How can there be?" returned Guy, simply. "Surely, if your husband knows of them and sanctions them, nobody else has any right to make remarks?"

"Ah, but he doesn't know all!" cried Ianthe, in a burst of confession. "He doesn't know, he doesn't realize, *how* I love you. I wonder whether he would care very much if he did? Guy, I am in

love with you ; *that* he doesn't even guess. And yet I love him too. My feelings to you don't interfere in the very least with my feelings to him. They are a thing apart. Oh yes, I love him too ; there is no doubt in my mind about that."

"But, Ianthe——" began Guy, hesitatingly.

She looked up at the word, brightly yet shyly. "Go on, dear Guy," she said.

"Ianthe," resumed the lad, gathering courage as he spoke, "it is morally impossible for you to be in love with two men at the same time."

She shivered visibly, and looked down.

"Well, but isn't it?" pursued Guy, gravely.

"Don't put it like that—it hurts me," she replied. "It may be so—I daren't look it in the face. Can it be really true?"

"Ask your own heart," said Guy, in a low voice.

A pause. A soft evening breeze played in the long grass at their feet, and rippled the surface of the stream; the Parks were deserted, and there was no other sound.

"Yes," she said at length, in a half-whisper.

"And what——" asked Guy, holding her hand close, and bending over her. He had not words to finish the sentence, but she knew well enough what he meant.

"Can I show it more plainly than I do?" she murmured, her face crimsoning.

Guy fetched a deep breath. The avowal came home to him with tremendous force, and he felt for the first time the seriousness of his position. She, a married woman, had owned to him in so many words that she was not in love with her husband, and that she was in love with

him. What was to be done? He couldn't run away with her. And yet that, to Guy's inexperienced mind, was what people usually did in such cases—with the inevitable *esclandre*, etc., to follow. The lad was terribly perplexed, and touched, too; a feeling of great pity for his companion welled up in his heart, and without venturing to say a word he silently pressed her hand.

"There!" she said at last. "I've said it—and now let it never be mentioned between us again. You know my position, Guy; I have deliberately taken an irrevocable step in life, and I must go on in the path I have chosen. I don't pretend that my lot is a particularly happy one. How can it be? Happy? Why, Guy, I am his—his, absolutely—and you have no idea how masterful he is, beneath all that outward appearance of indifference. I

dare not say my very soul's my own! Ah, you little think it, because you don't know him. I look forward to a whole lifetime of this with despair," she continued, with a calm smile which to Guy was most ineffably pathetic. "Well, it's my lot, and can't be avoided. All we can do is to help each other to make our love productive of good, and not harm. And you will do what you can for me, dear Guy—won't you?"

"You know I would die for you," answered poor Guy, now deeply moved.

They sat for half an hour longer, murmuring and cooing together in a melancholy, lovesick way, as is the custom of persons, I believe, so situated. By this time Guy was fully persuaded that he was very, very deeply in love with Ianthe, and the conviction gave a gravity and importance to his young views of life which had

scarcely distinguished them before. Of course, he could never marry now. He must be faithful, his whole life long, to the woman who had given him her heart; it would "hurt" her to hear that he had taken to himself a wife, and widen the distance between them. There was something in this reflection which appealed very winningly to his sense of the romantic. He was not only the depositary of a woman's secret, but the very hero of the romance which gathered round it; he was bound by a mysterious tie never to do that which, in years to come, his father would naturally expect him to do; he held a unique position in the world, a position verging delightfully upon the immoral, yet quite unassailable by recognised methods of procedure—for what man, or what law, could come to either of them and say, "Thou shalt not love?"—and, from that

time forth, would have to go through life with a certain half-guilty, half-painful, half-consolatory consciousness locked up in his bosom which would differentiate him from all his friends and exercise a potent influence on all his actions. Poor Guy! He was very young, and the whole affair seemed wonderfully real to him.

The die was cast, and from the hour they left the Parks and went their several ways—for Ianthe would not allow him to see her home—Guy's life became a very strange one; dominated by a mass of conflicting ideas, and disturbed by the new element that had been so unexpectedly forced into it. A day never passed without some communication passing between the two; for if they did not actually meet, there was always the post to fall back upon, and I am sorry to say that Guy so contrived matters that his *billets doux*

should be delivered when he knew that the Professor, whose indisposition soon passed off, was engaged in lecturing. And opportunities for private meeting seemed, somehow, to become rarer. The two would frequently find themselves guests at the same garden-party or reception, and then they made what use they could of the occasion; but the conditions were scarcely favourable to very satisfactory philandering, and Guy, who was particularly sensitive to the proprieties, never for a moment forgot that they were surrounded with observant eyes. He gradually grew variable in his temper; sometimes overflowing with high spirits, at others taciturn and moody, according as the course of what he called his true love ran smoothly or the reverse. And one of the very worst features of the change that had come over him was the way in which he treated Cecil Urquhart.

Cecil, naturally light-hearted and sweet-tempered, was the last youth in the world to resent a temporary aberration of this sort, even in his best friend; but even Cecil felt a trifle sore when he found himself persistently and systematically avoided, and the intercourse between them gradually but surely being undermined.

At last he determined that he would have it out with Guy. The two were sitting one night—a very rare event, just then—in Cecil's rooms, and the conversation had flagged somewhat. Suddenly Cecil said:

"Guy, do you remember a little bit of warning I once gave you? Last term it was—just after the boats, you know."

Guy looked uneasy, and pretended that he didn't know what the other meant.

"And another little bit of warning, too—while we were walking home from that

picnic," continued Cecil, ignoring Guy's disclaimer. "It was just after we had been introduced to Mrs. Pottifer."

Cecil spoke with intentional carelessness, as though he only mentioned the name in order to identify the occasion alluded to; and of course Guy's ready blood overspread his features furiously.

"Well, Guy," said Cecil, without waiting for an answer, "my prediction has come true. I told you I was a better judge of human nature than you were, and you have proved my words. Do you think you're any the happier for it?"

"I don't know what you're driving at," stammered Guy, lamely.

"Shocking!" exclaimed Cecil, shaking his head seriously. "Worse, even, than I feared. Guy, you *do* know what I'm driving at. Who wouldn't know, if anybody else were here? Do you suppose

the whole College is blind? Do you suppose *I'm* blind—I, whom you have gone near cutting for the last month or so? Perhaps you think I don't mind being cut. That's as may be. But there's one thing I do mind. I do mind seeing you go half off your head, in the very face of day, after a married woman."

"How dare you say such a thing to me?" cried Guy, starting to his feet in a rage.

"It doesn't require any particular amount of courage," replied Cecil, calmly, as he rammed down the tobacco in his pipe. "I don't mind your being angry in the very least. Guy, my dear boy, better think the matter over again. Just look at it. Here you are, in full view of everybody in St. Mary's who cares to watch you, carrying on in the absurdest manner with the wife of one of the Professors. I

dare say she's fond of you—I've no doubt she says she is—but she's doing you a bad turn, believe me, and if you only heard what people say of you behind your back, you'd think so too. I only wonder the Professor himself doesn't pull you up; but perhaps he looks upon the whole affair as too childish to disturb him, though he might give his wife a hint. It doesn't look well for a young married woman to flirt quite so openly, especially with a fellow some years younger than herself."

"Flirt!" exclaimed poor Guy, tragically. "Ianthe a flirt! Ah, if you only knew—if I only dared tell you——"

"Well, if it isn't a mere flirtation it must be something worse, that's all," replied Cecil, serenely. "No, don't be tempted to tell me anything—I don't want to know. But if the situation is so desperately serious, what's to be the end of it?"

"What, indeed!" echoed Guy, his anger all gone, and really rather enjoying the discussion, though he wouldn't have acknowledged it for the world. "It's all very well for you to preach to me, Cecil. You've never had my experience—you're talking of something you can't understand, because you've never been through it. What do you know about love? How should you know what it is to be in love with a woman you can never marry?"

"Pooh!" said Cecil, laughing. "I don't believe you know a bit more about such things than I do. If you did, I should say that you ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself, and she too, for encouraging you in such nonsense. She's old enough to know better, at any rate, even if you aren't. Don't you think so yourself, now? Come!"

"One can't talk about it in that way; at

least *I* can't," answered Guy, dolorously. "I remember once hearing of an old Rabbinical tradition that the first human beings were created bi-sexual, and that afterwards each of them was divided, and then the two halves, male and female, went through the world seeking each other ever afterwards, until they met again. Well, you may laugh as much as you like, but I believe there's a certain truth in that; I've thought so ever since I met —Ianthe—so very much too late, as it turns out. Of course, she's married, and there's an end of it so far; but that doesn't make it any the easier to bear, I can tell you."

"Oh, I see," retorted Cecil, with mock gravity. "You and Mrs. Pottifer are the divided halves of the same antediluvian original; you have been looking out for one another for the last few hundreds of

thousands of years, and at last you've found her—in the wife of a dried-up old Professor of Seismology. Well, it's a very interesting theory — very. Scarcely calculated to promote domestic happiness, though, when one of the wandering halves has already attached itself to the wrong man."

"Jeer away," said Guy, filling himself another pipe. "But remember one thing. It's all very well to tell me I ought to cut the affair, and be false to the woman I love; but what about her? Would you have me play so base a part as to desert one who has given me her heart—who—who depends upon my honour, my fidelity——"

"The devil she does!" cried Cecil. "Then she's a shameless hussy, and I'd tell her so to her face. Given you her heart, indeed; depends upon your honour

and fidelity—why, Guy, the woman's no better than she ought to be. What right has she to be giving away her heart at all? She's making a fool of you, my dear boy, and she'll leave you in a ridiculous position at last, take my word for it. Be guided by me, and don't give her the chance. Extricate yourself, and do it at once, or you'll live to regret it, Guy, you will indeed."

"Ah! It's easy for you to talk," sighed poor Guy, with bowed head.

Cecil got up, seated himself upon the arm of Guy's low easy-chair, and laid his hand caressingly on the lad's curls.

"It's awfully good of you not to be angry with me, dear old chap," he said, in a very gentle voice. "But you know, Guy, bystanders see most of the game, and the game you're playing is a losing one. And then, you must remember, I

know you pretty well, and I don't believe for a single moment that you're really in love with this Professor's wife. You think you are, of course; but it's all imagination —the purest imagination, believe me. If you weren't to see her or hear from her for a month, you'd forget all about her. Tell me, now, in confidence; when was it you first began to fancy yourself in love with Mrs. Pottifer, and what led to it?"

"It—it was—two or three weeks ago," stammered Guy, hesitatingly. "I never cared for her—or thought about her—much, before then. We went up the river, and—but there, I can't tell you. Don't press me too far, Cecil; I can't bear it, I can't indeed."

"But what made you ask her to go up the river with you?" inquired Cecil. "I thought you always barred that sort of thing."

"I didn't ask her," replied Guy; "that is, I—she—proposed——"

"That's enough," rejoined Cecil, with a quiet smile. "I see it all plainly enough now. Well, Guy, I won't bother you any more, though there's nothing I wouldn't do to help you out of the hobble, dear boy—why, I'd make love to her myself, if I thought it would do any good. But if she's as fearfully gone on you as you seem to think she is, I'm afraid love's labour would be lost. Anyhow, hazard warily for the future. I'll do what I can for you. And, Guy——"

They both rose, and Cecil put his hands on Guy's shoulders, looking frankly and smilingly in his face. The cloud had entirely passed away between them, and Guy felt altogether happier and easier in his mind at this renewal of their old confidence than he had felt for weeks.

Certainly his love for Mrs. Pottifer was an exotic growth compared with the matured, strong trust and friendship which existed between him and Cecil. There was no need for Cecil to complete the sentence. It was getting late, and both were glad to get to bed; but Cecil could not resist a parting shot.

"What a pity it wasn't Hypatia instead!" he said, as Guy passed through the door.

This set Guy laughing, and he turned in feeling that whatever perplexities there might be in store for him he would not be entirely helpless as long as Cecil Urquhart was his friend.

Mrs Pottifer, it must be confessed, was an exceedingly peculiar young woman. Married to a man nearly old enough to be her father, it had never occurred to her, until she met Guy Miller, that she was not in love with her husband. That

he was extremely fond of her, in his absent fashion, was unquestionable; that she was of the greatest practical use to him was patent to the most superficial observer. And she had made him an admirable wife. Naturally of an inquiring and intelligent disposition, a girl of unusually cultivated mind in certain directions, and having no other interests or aims in life, Ianthe had thrown herself into the study of the Professor's special subject with immense zeal. No man ever had a more docile, more thoroughly companionable, wife. She accompanied him upon his travels, she checked his calculations, she compiled his statistics, and she looked after his personal and domestic comforts to perfection. If he was unconsciously exacting, she, at any rate, never complained; it had never occurred to her that she could be better off than

she was. Then, suddenly and when she least expected it, the revelation came. It flashed upon her like a light from heaven; Guy Miller, the young, fresh, handsome undergraduate, with not a trace of self-consciousness or ill-intent, one day crossed her path, and from that moment she was no longer the same woman. All her dormant passions sprang, strong and ardent, into life. For the first time she knew what love really was. It seized her in its fierce, resistless clutch, and she was helpless. Already she had begun to think of her husband with a sort of remorseful horror. She contrasted his seamed face and shaggy beard with Guy's clear-cut profile and beautifully moulded lips, and wondered, with a little shiver of disgust, how her husband would look in that neat straw hat, with its broad coloured ribbon, and those loose, graceful flannels, which

sat on Guy so perfectly. It was only after a severe struggle that she made her extraordinary declaration; but, that struggle once over, the declaration came without effort. She was brought face-to-face with the stern fact that she had fallen hopelessly in love; and her confession of that love was something fearfully delightful to her.

But Nemesis was already on her track. The Professor, absent-minded and abstracted as he was, had on several occasions been dimly conscious that a certain subtle change had come over her. She was no longer as prompt, as eager, as quick-witted in co-operating with him as she had been before. Her attention often flagged. A look of weariness would show itself in her face, and she would plead for a walk in the fresh air on the score of headache and fatigue; and

then he noticed that on her return from such expeditions she would be feverishly gay, and for the next few hours would throw herself into his favourite pursuits or chatter upon his favourite topics with curious and unwonted energy. Still, he did not suspect the truth. Undergraduates were, to him, nonentities; and he no more connected the alteration in his wife's behaviour with love for a handsome youth of nineteen or twenty than with the legendary inhabitant of the moon.

Mrs. Ramsbottom, however, was somewhat clearer-sighted; and Mrs. Ramsbottom one day took it into her head that her duty compelled her to give the Professor a hint. It fell out on this wise. Tramping through the Parks, she espied Mrs. Pottifer sitting in close proximity to Guy upon a bench near the river. There was no mistake this time; and, stepping off the

gravel path on to the grass, so that her footsteps should not be heard, she posted off full tilt to the Professor's house.

"What, Mr. Professor, indoors this lovely day?" exclaimed the good lady, as she was ushered into the sanctum of seismology. "Really, you're quite a martyr to science, I declare. You ought to take more exercise. Nothing like exercise for strengthening the body to bear the exertions of the mind. But I came to call upon your wife; where is she?"

"My wife?" replied the Professor, absently; "I really am not quite sure. I think she must have gone out. I am sorry. It was not I, then, whom you wished to see?"

"Well, upon my word, Mr. Professor!" ejaculated Mrs. Ramsbottom, in shrill protest. "Now is it likely that I should presume to intrude upon your learned

leisure? Earthquakes, too; such interesting phenomena, and so important to the welfare of—of—things in general, you know. Of course I know nothing about such things myself, and I don't pretend to, as some people might; in fact, I know very little about anything, except what I pick up from my husband about Prehistoric Heraldry; but I've an insatiable thirst for knowledge, and there's nothing I love so much as learning something I didn't know before. Now don't you think, Mr. Professor, that there's a great pleasure in becoming aware of a perfectly—new—fact?"

The impressiveness which the worthy Readeress in Prehistoric Heraldry imparted to her enunciation of the last three words rather disconcerted her unsuspecting auditor.

"No doubt, no doubt, Mrs. Rams-

bottom," he replied, vaguely; "the acquisition of knowledge, the apprehension of an entirely new idea, must always be pleasurable to a thoughtful mind But such gratifications are but rare in my own experience—rare indeed, I regret to say. It is not every day that discoveries are made."

"I dare say!" answered Mrs. Ramsbottom, nodding her head portentously. "But I've heard my husband say, that the next best thing to learning is teaching; and if one can't discover a new fact every day, at any rate one can impart one's knowledge to other people. Else what are we Professors here for? Mrs. Pottifer, now; I declare I quite envy Mrs. Pottifer her opportunities. You find her an apt pupil, I'll be bound."

"You are right," acknowledged the Professor, gravely. "My wife has a

singular capacity for study, and affords me no small assistance in my scientific researches."

"I was sure of it!" replied Mrs. Ramsbottom. "Indeed, I've thought once or twice she looked as though she studied too much. Young people, you know, can't stand as much confinement as we old folks. And they're fond of seeing other young people, too; which is natural enough, of course. Haven't you noticed any *change* in your wife during the last few weeks, Mr. Professor?"

The Professor opened his eyes with a somewhat puzzled look.

"Change?" he repeated, mechanically. "Well—I don't know, I'm sure. I have fancied once or twice that there has been a certain restlessness—a desire for more out-door exercise, perhaps; and unfortunately my duties do not always permit

me to accompany her in her walks. But I do not object to her walking. Her health, no doubt, requires it; and health, of course, is a most important consideration — within limits, of course; within limits."

Thus the Professor, peering innocently at Mrs. Ramsbottom through his spectacles, and rather wishing she would go. But Mrs. Ramsbottom was now in full sight of her quarry, and had no intention of abandoning the chase.

"Ah!" she said, with a pregnant snap. "As you say, it *is* a pity you can't be her escort; in my young days a husband was always considered the properest protector of his wife. Of course you know she's always with young Miller?"

The suddenness of this attack, which was intentional on the part of Mrs. Ramsbottom, did not have the desired effect.

The Professor's face retained its expression of polite boredom, and not a trace of jealousy or wrath was perceptible in his accent as he said, with courteous indifference:

"Mr. Miller of Muriel, you mean? Oh, yes, we know the young man very well. He has excellent abilities, I believe. My wife seems to like him very much."

"Like him very much!" almost shouted Mrs. Ramsbottom, aghast. "But good gracious me, Professor, d'ye mean to say you don't object to him and your wife always going about together?"

"I don't see why I should," said the Professor, settling his spectacles upon his nose. "My wife isn't likely to do him any harm."

"The man's mad," breathed Mrs. Ramsbottom to herself, after a pause of astonishment. "Well, Mr. Professor," she resumed,

"of course it's not for *me* to interfere; I need only say I wasn't thinking about the young man at all, but about your wife—your wife, Mr. Professor, and you yourself. And this I *will* say; that for your wife's sake you ought not to allow it. I know more about undergraduates than you do, and I tell you they're a loose lot, Mr. Professor, a loose lot, and it's not to the credit of *any* young woman, a married woman too, to be seen day after day sauntering and philandering with a smooth-cheeked boy——"

"You think it a waste of time?" asked the Professor, mildly.

"Hear him!" ejaculated Mrs. Ramsbottom, casting up her eyes and hands in despair at the Professor's fatuity. "A waste of time, he calls it. I tell you, Mr. Professor, that your wife is being talked about all over the University.

Her name is coupled with young Miller's in a way that isn't creditable to either you or her. I say nothing of the boy himself, because he's only an undergraduate, and I don't suppose has much of a character to lose; but things must have come to a pretty pass when the wife of one of our principal Professors forgets herself as your wife is doing, and the only man in the place who doesn't see it is her own husband."

"So!" exclaimed Professor Pottifer, with a German elongation of the vowel, looking contemplatively at Mrs. Ramsbottom. "I begin to apprehend your meaning. You are afraid for my wife's good name, and our future domestic happiness. Well, I will put her to the test. To me, it seems impossible and absurd that I should have a rival in a boy who might almost be my grandson. It is incredible that a woman

like my wife, who enjoys the advantages of studying, under *me*, the wonderful and enlightening science of seismology, should be attracted from it by a youth whose conversation consists of trivialities—a youth who has only just passed his Moderations. But, as I say, I will test her; and if, as you think——"

The door opened, and Ianthe, radiant from one of the sweetest interviews with Guy that she had ever had, stepped into the apartment.

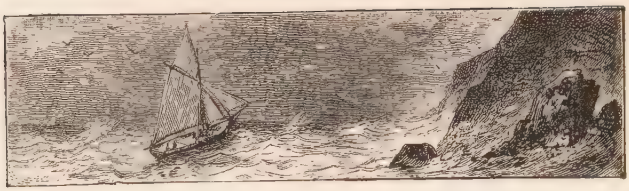
"Ah," exclaimed the Professor, "you return very opportunely. Mrs. Ramsbottom has been here some time, hoping to see you. By the way, can you tell me the result of those calculations you began a week ago with respect to the force of the magnetic waves observable at Cincinnati in 1876?"

Mrs. Ramsbottom, bewildered at this

sudden change of topic, looked blankly from one to the other. A pause followed, during which the Professor's eyes never swerved from his wife's face. She, startled and confused, hesitated a minute, and then was fain to confess that she had not touched the calculations since the day they were first given to her; had, in fact, forgotten all about them.

"Ah!" said the Professor; and there was a world of meaning in the monosyllable. "Ianthe, Mrs. Ramsbottom is a ve-ry clever woman; and perhaps she would be glad of a cup of tea. For myself, I have still some work to do, so you had better go into the drawing-room."

But the Professor did no work when he was left alone. He only lighted his pipe, and smoked very meditatively for a long time, with a fierce, deep frown upon his brow.



CHAPTER III.

THE PASTOR AND HIS FLOCK.

THERE is an ancient aphorism which warns us that it is always dangerous to despise an enemy; and it was unfortunate for the Rev. Robert Miller that he was constitutionally unable to recognise its cogency. Mr. Miller was a clever, perhaps, even, a brilliant, man; one who could hold his own with anybody who entered the intellectual arena against him, and could, moreover, bring into the fray a whole armoury of facts, quotations, and repartees wherewith to rout the armies of the aliens. But he had two joints in his harness. He

despised his enemies ; and he had no tact. His friend Dean Sherborne, of whom we have caught a glimpse, saw this, and as the Dean himself was not only a born diplomatist, but a man of the widest natural sympathies, the advice he tendered to the unyielding minister was steadily in favour of conciliation. He admired the abilities of the Nonconformist, liked him for his many sterling qualities, and greatly enjoyed discussions with him on some literary or theological subject ; nay, he took a keen human interest in Mr. Miller's pastoral work, and, being an avowed member of the Broad Church party, had on one occasion presided at a Town Missionary meeting held in the Queen Street Congregational Chapel itself. But conciliation was abhorrent to Mr. Miller's soul. He did not suffer fools gladly. He could not sympathize with ignorance ; he would not

descend to blandishments in dealing with an opponent; the fallacies and irrelevancies of a weak brother roused in him only an impatient scorn, and to bigotry he gave no quarter. The Dean, on the other hand, could and did do all these things, and was never gentler or kinder than when dealing with the exasperating futilities of an obstinate and unlearned man; and the consequence was that those who criticised him most sharply as a time-server still loved him as a friend, while the sincerest admirers of Mr. Miller as writer, preacher, and man of letters, remained his admirers and, in some cases, nothing more.

We have already indicated the attitude of Mr. Miller with regard to the proposed bazaar. To such a man as he, the trivialities inseparable from such a project could not but be profoundly distasteful. To expect him to hand about ices and cups of

tea, play jackal for the fair stall-keepers, cajole the unwary into tempting fortune in a Gipsy's Cave, crack laboured jokes, and perform the required part of reverend merry-andrew, was to offer him an insult only excusable on the score of mental ineptitude. But if the bazaar could be successfully carried through without such personal degradations to himself, he was quite willing that the effort should be made; for the debt upon the chapel was both discreditable and embarrassing, and the sooner it was wiped off the better. The scheme, therefore, on this consideration alone, had the formal sanction of the minister, in spite of the continued attacks directed against it by Mr. Claggett and Mr. Boyce, the former of whom had now openly joined the ranks of the Opposition.

Another disadvantage from which the

minister suffered was the want of intellectual touch between himself and his own supporters. His chapel was always crowded, the pew-rents were considerable, and his fame as a preacher was great; and yet there was scarcely a man or woman upon the church-books with whom he was on terms of that friendship which is born of equal sympathies. For Mr. Gervoise he entertained the sincere respect due to undoubted worth and unostentatious piety; but the narrowness of the good man's views, his utter inability to judge a question otherwise than by the standards of the Penny Pulpit or the Shorter Catechism, and his timid abstention from all, or nearly all, the more advanced literature of the day, rendered any free interchange of thought between the two a moral impossibility. Mr. Searle, his junior deacon, the minister frankly detested; Mrs. Searle was

of course equally obnoxious, but then she was amusing as well, which her husband wasn't; Miss Dabbs bored him terribly, and got him talked about; while Mr. Gough, the shy young bachelor of fifty, who had a weakness for prophecy, and was given to the study of such works as *Jukes on the Little Horn*, had hitherto failed to justify his existence in the only way open to him, according to the minister's view, namely, by marrying Miss Dabbs. It was the feeling of isolation produced by such thoughts as these which, unconsciously but none the less really, led to the delivery of those admirable discourses upon 'The Soul's Loneliness' that drew such vast congregations to the Sunday evening services in Queen Street just about this time, and notices of which appeared in the *Seaborough Critic and South-Coast Arbitrator* every Monday morning. These

notices, much appreciated by the church-members, were a source of peculiar pride and gratification to Mr. Searle; a pathetic fact, but scarcely unique in the long history of human self-complacency and its delusions.

We do not intend to describe the bazaar in detail. It came off in the very height of the season, when the place was crowded with visitors, and proved a tremendous success. Miss Dabbs, looking almost bride-like in pearl-gray ribbons and a lace bonnet, presided at the refreshment stall, while Mrs. Searle, magnificent in crimson silk, drove a lucrative trade in tea-cosies, kettle-holders, fire-screens, chair-backs, and other articles dear to the domestic mind. And the best of the fun was that the visitors seemed actually to enjoy being swindled. They paid five shillings apiece for dozens of shilling photographs of Mr.

Miller with alacrity, only, however, to feel their inferiority to the still more enterprising or enthusiastic among them who had invested seven-and-sixpence in the same portrait coloured. Mr. Searle, in a white waistcoat and bright blue tie, brimmed over with the genial drollery which distinguished him. Nothing would suit his humour but that Mr. Gough, whose old-fashioned brown coat and awkward homeliness stamped him a natural butt, should act as tout, or showman, outside the Grotto of Destiny, in order, as the playful haberdasher remarked, that his native gift of patter and repartee should be turned to the profit of the cause. Poor Mr. Gough blushed and giggled through his part to the very best of his abilities, and at length, gaining confidence, began to think that a man who was the cause of so much mirth in others must really have an unsuspected

vein of humour in himself; whereupon he waxed bolder, and ventured upon so many witticisms at the expense of those who hesitated to go in, that his capers soon attracted quite a crowd, and the shillings began to pour in by the handful. Then Mr. Searle, elated beyond measure at the success of his little joke, meditated a yet deeper and more daring plot. Assuming an air of confidence and mystery, the misguided man strutted from group to group, and, in stealthy tones, dropped furtive hints that at a certain time and place a Stump Oration would be delivered by no less a personage than the minister himself. *Quem Deus vult perdere, prius dementat.* Mr. Miller was, of course, present on the occasion—amiably dignified, severely bland. Suddenly, a breath of the rumour reached his ears. He turned pale with wrath, and, walking straight up to the

offending deacon, said, in a low, calm voice :

"Mr. Searle, I hear that you have been making an unauthorized addition to the programme. Will you please withdraw it—and *at once ?*'

The deacon started, reddened, broke into an embarrassed smile, and attempted to turn it off jestingly. But a glance from the pastor's eye showed that he was in no mood to be trifled with, and Mr. Searle confusedly turned tail. He stood in great awe of Mr. Miller after that.

The success of the bazaar, however, was not affected by this very characteristic incident. The affair lasted two days, and the net result of the speculation was a substantial balance of over four hundred pounds, which virtually cleared the chapel of its debt. This most satis-

factory issue was of course primarily due to the energy displayed by the ladies of the congregation, and Mr. Miller was not altogether untroubled with certain twinges of conscience when he considered how great was the benefit he reaped from an undertaking which had been from the very first so thoroughly distasteful to him. There, however, his uneasiness began and ended. It never occurred to him to remember the additional virulence which his tacit sanction of the scheme had imparted to the animosity of the Opposition, now reinforced by the defection of Mr. Claggett. But it proved the signal for a declaration of open war.

The fact was that Mr. Claggett was one of those persons the pole-star of whose opinions varies in the opposite ratio to the opinions of other people. Whatever anyone said to him he differed from

at once and on principle. He argued and denied for the mere sake of arguing and denying. Tell him it was a fine day, and he would immediately affirm that it was chilly, and looked like rain. Profess a predilection for boiled mutton, and he would promptly avow a preference for roast beef. With a brother of Arminian tendencies, Mr. Claggett would at once reason in favour of election and free grace; but bring him into contact with a Calvinist, and he took up a brief for free will. And, a universal dissentient himself, he was unable to brook contradiction in others; opposition maddened him; so that when, after joining Queen Street Chapel, he found his criticisms quietly ignored and his attempted interferences resisted, no great penetration was necessary to foretell what the result would be. The minister, as we have

seen, could not stoop to conciliation ; yet even he, when exposed to Mr. Claggett's attacks upon the bazaar proposal, replied in something of a conciliatory tone ; and we know with what measure of success.

His new position once decided upon, Mr. Claggett entered upon a definite course of action, which he had carefully thought out and prepared. In the first place, he avoided all open intercourse with Mr. Boyce, whom, to do him justice, he soon despised in his heart almost as much as Mr. Miller did. Secondly, he made a point of never, under any circumstances, missing a service in the chapel, and surprised many of the congregation by the extreme industry and fervour with which he took notes of Mr. Miller's sermons. Thirdly, he contrived, at the expense of no small pains and difficulty, to get hold of the original Trust-Deed of Eusebius

Appleyard ; and this he studied with much diligence, making copious extracts from it as he read. And the study of this venerable document seemed, to a superficial observer, to have had a most salutary effect upon his disposition. He was still the professed opponent of the Government party in the chapel ; but somehow his manners became less rough, and the tones of his voice less aggressive, than before, and both minister and deacons wondered at the unwonted benignity which mellowed his harsh face. He still found fault, and cavilled, and made impracticable suggestions ; but when his remarks were unheeded, and his criticisms quietly passed by, a patient smile was all the retaliation he indulged in, where before there would have been bitter words and scowls.

At last Mr. Claggett occasioned quite

a little flutter of interest and curiosity among the congregation by appearing one Sunday in chapel with a stranger. This was a young man of some five or six and twenty years of age, dressed in a conspicuously dissenting-made suit of black broadcloth, with a sallow complexion and somewhat sanctimonious expression of face. Not altogether a pleasant-looking young man, in fact; but he was noticed to listen very attentively, perhaps even critically, to the sermon, and every now and then a glance of mutual understanding would pass between him and Mr. Claggett, in whose pew he sat. It was further remarked that Mr. Claggett did not introduce this gentleman to any other member of the congregation; but the fact soon transpired that he was staying for a few days at the lawyer's house, and that his name was Gosling.

"I wonder who that was with Mr. Claggett on Sunday," remarked Miss Dabbs, meditatively, a few days afterwards, to her friend Mrs. Searle, with whom she was drinking tea. "It's curious he should never have introduced him to any of us."

"I dare say it's no great loss," returned Mrs. Searle, with a defiant sniff. "I never did think anything of Mr. Claggett, and I don't think anything now. The man's a traitor in the camp, you mark my words. He's gone over to the Boyce faction, an' is no better than an enemy to us and ours."

"I know he's a little difficult to get on with," said Miss Dabbs, plaintively. "But it struck me he'd been so much nicer lately—not quite so quarrelsome, you know. And now he's got a gentleman staying with him—such an interesting

looking young man. I wonder who it is."

"Interesting, you call him!" snorted Mrs. Searle, with scorn. "Well, he doesn't interest *me*, I thank my stars. One Claggett's quite enough in a church, I think. And I do wonder at you, Miss Dabbs, for not seeing through the man. Not so quarrelsome, lately! What right 'as he to be quarrelsome at all? Boyce didn't matter; nobody was obliged to pay any attention to Boyce. But this man's different. One meets him constantly, and can't help hearing what he's got to say; and the trouble and worry he stirs up, and the fault he finds, and——"

"Oh, dear Mrs. Searle, I know, I know," interrupted Miss Dabbs, soothingly. "But we can't *all* be amiable, you must remember; and though he certainly was very disagreeable about the bazaar, he

may really have had conscientious scruples. Things strike one so differently, don't they? And then, you know, the bazaar was a great success, so it didn't matter so much after all Still, I think he might have introduced his friend to somebody."

"Have some more tea?" said Mrs. Searle, rather brusquely.

"Not any more, thank you," replied Miss Dabbs. "I must be going now, I think."

"Oh, stay just a few minutes longer," said Mrs. Searle. "I'm expecting Mr. Miller almost every moment, and I know you like meeting him. And then p'raps he'll be able to tell you something about this man you take so much interest in, you know."

"Mr. Miller?" exclaimed Miss Dabbs, in pleased surprise. "Well, perhaps I *will* wait a minute or two. One always

likes to meet the minister; and then it would hardly be respectful to go away just when he was expected, would it?"

"Very disrespectful indeed," answered Mrs. Searle, with a sardonic smile. "One should always support one's minister; at least, that's *my* view, and I generally act up to it. In fact, I make a point of asking 'im to tea two or three times a month, for after all, you see, the poor man's got no wife, and there's nothing like them as has a cheerful family circle making them as hasn't a bit welcome, you know. I don't know what he'd do without *us*, now, that I don't. In the case of one's own minister, too, I consider it as nothing less than a Christian duty."

Just then, steps were heard in the hall, and the Rev. Robert Miller was announced. Both ladies rose effusively.

"So delighted to see you, Mr. Miller,"

exclaimed Mrs. Searle, in her most impressive tones. "We were just speaking of you. Take this low arm-chair, and let me give you a cup of tea. Do you take cream *and* sugar?"

"Thanks," said the minister, who scarcely looked like a man whom it would be easy to patronize. "Well, Miss Dabbs, the great enterprise turned out a wonderful success, thanks to you and Mrs. Searle. It's a relief to feel the chapel's virtually clear of debt."

"Oh, *isn't* it!" ejaculated Miss Dabbs. "It *is* such a relief off one's mind. One feels sorry that the scheme didn't commend itself to quite all our friends; but even they must acknowledge that the result justifies the means."

"That's rather casuistical, isn't it?" said Mr. Miller, smiling.

"There's some people as nothing will

satisfy," observed Mrs. Searle, tossing her head. "But luckily it don't much matter whether they're satisfied or not."

"I *should* like to know what Mr. Claggett says about it now," said Miss Dabbs, tentatively. "I'm sure he must see that it was a good thing. Do you know at all, Mr. Miller, whether——"

"Claggett?" repeated the minister, indifferently. "I don't know, I'm sure. I suppose he objected to the thing on principle."

"I sh'd just like to know what that man *doesn't* object to on principle," exclaimed Mrs. Searle, her bracelets rattling with excitement. "I see he brought a friend to chapel with 'im on Sunday, and Miss Dabbs 'as been wondering who it was."

"Do you know at all, Mr. Miller?" asked Miss Dabbs, timidly.

"No," replied Mr. Miller, handing back

his cup. "I didn't even know he had a friend with him. Stay, though; now you speak of it, I think I did see some one in his pew—a rather shabby-looking young man, wasn't he? Well, I didn't notice him particularly. By-the-bye, Mrs. Searle, I wonder whether you could tell me where I could get a good plain cook. My present one is going to be married—they will do it, somehow—and I want another as soon as I can get one, for my boy Guy will be coming home in two or three weeks now, and it won't do to have no cook. Where am I to find one?"

"A cook," repeated Mrs. Searle. "Oh, I dare say I can help you. Let me think, now. I heard of one only the other day; but I'm afraid she'd scarcely do—I think she was a Unitarian."

"If she can roast a joint and make a pudding I might overlook any defects in

her theology," said Mr. Miller, with much gravity.

"O Mr. Miller, you'd never engage a Unitarian cook!" exclaimed Miss Dabbs, horrified. "Of course, it might prove a blessing to the cook; still, you know, we *are* told not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers, and—and—I *do* wonder what some of our friends would say; Mr. Claggett, for instance, who, to be sure——"

"My good lady," interrupted the minister, half-laughing and half-annoyed, "you may be perfectly sure that I shall not consult Mr. Claggett about the matter; nor have I any intention of being yoked with anybody, unequally or otherwise. I want a cook, not a wife; and if either you or Mrs. Searle can assist me in the search——"

"My stars!" ejaculated Mrs. Searle,

staring with a very red face at two cards which had just been handed to her by the servant. Mr. Miller and Miss Dabbs, who had not noticed what had happened, started, and looked inquiringly at their hostess. "Well, wonders will never cease," continued that lady, still in a condition of amazement. "If here isn't Mr. Claggett come to call, with that strange young man of his. You're in luck this time, Miss Dabbs. Put a couple o' chairs, Jane, and ask them to come in; and then bring two more tea-cups, and some fresh tea. I *should* like to know what this means; no good, I'll take my oath, for I don't believe the man could do a good thing if he tried to."

Scarcely was this charitable remark out of the speaker's mouth, than in walked the subject of it, accompanied by the mysterious stranger. Both gentlemen

looked a little uncomfortable at finding themselves in the presence of the minister; the encounter was evidently as unwelcome as it was unexpected. But the minister, courteously unconcerned as ever, seemed quite unconscious of their momentary embarrassment.

"This is an unlooked-for pleasure, Mr. Claggett," said Mrs. Searle, with tremendous stateliness. "Pray be seated; there will be some more tea directly; and Mr.—a—your friend——"

"Mr. Gosling; my nephew, ma'am, my nephew," put in Mr. Claggett, hastily. "Allow me to introduce Mr. Gosling to you, Mr. Miller. Come to stay a day or two at the seaside with me, you know."

Mr. Miller acknowledged the introduction in appropriate terms, and asked Mr. Gosling whether that was his first visit to the town.

"Yes, Sir," replied the young man, as he took a chair. He was a very dissenting-looking person, and his ill-cut coat of black broadcloth and loosely-tied black cravat sat awkwardly upon him. He was very far, too, from being at his ease, for he jerked his limbs about a good deal, continually crossing and uncrossing his legs, and was evidently at a loss how to dispose of his hands; and yet it was difficult to compassionate his nervousness, for there was a conceited look in his face, and a supercilious appearance about the whole man, which contrasted very oddly with his clownish air.

"My nephew hasn't had much time for holiday-making," remarked Mr. Claggett. "It has been all work and no play with him lately. He was thinking of going back on Monday, but I persuaded him to stay over a few days and take a rest."

"Oh, there's nothing like sea-air," said Miss Dabbs, "is there, Mrs. Searle?"

"And good society," suggested Mrs. Searle. "I must say I'm fond of society, —that is, when the people are congenial to one, of course. Do you take cream *and* sugar, Mr. Gosling?"

"Thank you, ma'am—yes, both, please," replied Mr. Claggett's nephew. "I s'pose you see a good deal of society here in Seaborough?"

"Oh, yes," replied Mrs. Searle, drawing herself up. "Of course in a connection like ours we have a large circle of acquaintances, especially in our position. Mr. Searle is one of the deacons, as I dare say you've heard, and in the season, when the place is full of visitors, one has a good many duties to attend to."

"Oh, indeed," murmured Mr. Gosling, vaguely; and then there ensued a pause.

"When do you expect Guy home again?" asked Miss Dabbs, turning to the minister.

"About the 18th or 20th, I think," replied the minister, brightening visibly. "I only wish it were sooner; the house seems very empty when the lad's away."

"I'm sure it does," said Miss Dabbs, sympathetically. "And we're all so fond of Guy. I hope he's doing well?"

"Oh, capitally, capitally," answered Mr. Miller. "My son, you know," he added, turning to Mr. Claggett. "I don't think you've ever met him."

"I don't think I have," returned Mr. Claggett. "He's at one of the Universities, isn't he?"

"Yes, at St. Mary's," said Mr. Miller.

"Is he going into the ministry, Sir?" asked Mr. Gosling, solemnly.

"No," replied Mr. Miller. "At least,

there's been no talk of any such thing hitherto; and I'm not sure that I should be much in favour of his doing so." The idea of his bright boy Guy having Searles and Claggetts to worry him for the best years of his life did not commend itself to the minister by any means.

"It all depends upon whether the young man himself has a vocation," observed Mr. Gosling. "Is he at all seriously disposed, Sir?"

"We will not discuss my son's future," said the minister, pale with wrath. "Miss Dabbs, may I get you some more tea?"

Mr. Gosling looked astonished and indignant. He did not understand being quietly shut up in this fashion, and his notions of what was due to himself incited him to say:

"My own opinion is that for men who haven't the Divine call to take upon them-

selves the ministerial office is to do great harm to the cause of the Gospel. And more than ever in a town like this, which, as far as I can see, is so greatly given over to the pride of life."

"A handsome town, though, isn't it," said Miss Dabbs, who, if the truth must be told, felt somewhat disenchanted. "And so full of visitors. The season has been exceptionally gay."

"Oh yes, it makes a fine appearance," answered Mr. Gosling, as he stirred his tea. "And there certainly are a large number of pleasure-seekers in it. I don't know. of course, 'ow much is done to bring them under the power o' the Word. But I s'pose there *are* places here where the Gospel's preached."

"Why, you were in our chapel last Sunday, weren't you?" exclaimed Mrs. Searle, ruffling. "We're very proud of

our chapel, I can tell you. The organ alone cost over seven 'undred pound. I dare say you noticed what a fine one it was." The deacon's wife was by no means the sort of woman to pass over a slight upon her meeting-house, especially in the presence of the minister.

"Yes, it must be a great privilege to be the pastor of such a congregation," replied Mr. Gosling. "And a very 'eavy responsibility as well. How's the work a-going on, Sir, among your people 'ere?"

"The 'work'?" repeated Mr. Miller. "What sort of work do you mean?"

"The work o' the Gospel," said the young man, sententiously; "preaching, soul-saving. From what I can see you seem to have a grand field, 'specially among the pleasure-seekers. There must be a frightful amount of 'eathenism in a place like this. Do you go in for any

open-air preaching, Sir, on the beach, for instance, or in the streets?"

No. Mr. Miller did not 'go in' for preaching out of doors.

"That's a pity, ain't it?" remarked Mr. Gosling, calmly.

Mrs. Searle nearly bounded out of her chair in astonishment and indignation. Who was this impertinent young man, who dared to take the minister to task in her own drawing-room? But she restrained herself, partly because words temporarily failed her, and partly because she felt, and with good reason, that the minister was perfectly well able to deal with the young jackanapes himself.

"Perhaps," replied Mr. Miller, with indifference.

Mr. Gosling, who had expected an answer more fraught with self-excuse—for of course he knew well enough that

the minister was no street-preacher—was rather taken aback, and felt conscious that he had been snubbed. Whereupon he first uncrossed and then recrossed his legs, put his hands in his pockets, took them out again, wriggled a little on his chair, and tossed his hair off his forehead, in a desperate attempt to appear at ease. Then Mr. Claggett came to the rescue.

"My nephew has had some experience in street-preaching himself," said he, looking towards Mr. Miller. "It was that, no doubt, which suggested his inquiry."

"Really," said Mr. Miller, with a dry smile. "And what sort of audiences do you get, Mr. Gosling?"

"Splendid audiences, Sir," answered Mr. Gosling. "None of your kid-gloved ladies and gentlemen, who go to church because it's the fashion, but working men and women, who aren't ashamed to be

seen of the world, or afraid to be heard singing at the top o' their voices, like the sound o' many waters. I don't believe much in a Gospel that's afraid of the open air. Besides, it's good practice against the time when one'll have a regular charge."

"So you think of entering the ministry?" said Mr. Miller, raising his eyebrows.

"I'm going to be ordained next week," was the complacent answer.

Nobody being able to think of anything to say appropriate to this announcement, a somewhat chilling silence fell upon the company. Mr. Gosling drummed with his foot, Miss Dabbs hemmed gently once or twice as she began to draw on her gloves, Mr. Claggett looked *distrait* and annoyed, while Mrs. Searle, flushed and angry, sat scowling into the empty fireplace. The only person who seemed per-

fectly comfortable and serene was Mr. Miller.

"By the way," observed Miss Dabbs, breaking into the pause much to the general relief, "by the way, Mr. Miller, is it true that there's a chance of Dean Sherborne being made the new Bishop?"

"Ah, that's more than I can tell you," replied the minister. "From a purely selfish standpoint, I hope not; I should be very sorry indeed to lose the Dean. But there's no doubt he's the fittest man for the post, and thoroughly deserves promotion."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Miss Dabbs. "I have just seen an article of his in one of the reviews, on the Ontological Basis of Theism. It looked very eloquent and learned."

"To be sure," responded the minister, cordially. "I'm glad you've noticed that

article. It embodies a most valuable and weighty argument, decorated with the subtlest wit and fancy."

"H'm," murmured Mr. Gosling, dubiously. "I don't quite see how a man can be witty and fanciful in dealing with such a subject as the existence of God. The thing seems out of place. Besides, what has a clergyman to do with discussing the question at all? Why can't he take it for granted, as all other Christians do?"

"You might be able to form a correcter judgment if you were to read the article," remarked Mr. Miller, dryly. "There are very few persons, within the limited circle of my own acquaintance, who are competent to criticise the Dean. It is even possible that you might learn something from it."

"I've always had a great respect for

the Dean," said Mrs. Searle, principally with a view to snubbing Mr. Gosling. "Pity there aren't more Church clergymen of the same sort; a really good man, I should say, according to his lights. Oh, I've got no bigotry about *me*, I'm glad to say, and I know a good man when I see one."

"I'm happy to agree with you, Mrs. Searle," responded Mr. Miller. "I don't know a kinder or more charitable man in England than Dean Sherborne; certainly, in all religious matters, he is liberality itself. No one would rejoice more than I if he were appointed to the vacant see; but I should feel his loss greatly, nevertheless. His influence is always on the side of good."

"Dean Sherborne!" exclaimed Mr. Gosling, meditatively, as though struck by the name for the first time. "Is that

the man who wrote a book some time ago called 'The Poets of Israel and Judah'?"

"The same," replied Mr. Miller.

"Oh, *that's* the man, is it?" continued Mr. Gosling. "Well, I didn't read the book itself, but I read a review of it in the *Christian Spy*, and O my, wasn't it cut up! In fact, they said it was saturated with infidelity from beginning to end. I don't know whether you ever see the *Spy*, Mr. Miller? It's a very good, safe paper; the editor used to be the superintendent of the Sunday-school I used to teach in, and so of course I know I can abide by what he says. Well, Dean Sherborne may be all you say he is—I don't dispute that at all—but nothing will ever convince *me* that he's a converted character."

"Are you a converted character, Mr. Gosling?" asked Mr. Miller, with lazy amusement.

"I, Sir?" exclaimed Mr. Gosling, turning red. "Of course I am. Why should I be going into the ministry else?"

"Nay, I can't tell, I'm sure," replied Mr. Miller, laughing. "But since you seem an authority upon the subject, I should be very much obliged if you would let me know just what conversion has done for you; in what way you are different from what you were before."

"In what way?" repeated the young man, taken somewhat aback. Then, falling into the usual plaintive twang appropriate to sacred subjects, he said:

"Why, I'm a new man; a new man in Christ Jesus. Before, I was lost; now, I'm a saved soul. I think that's difference enough."

"Unquestionably," assented Mr. Miller. "But all that implies something else. Do you think that conversion has made you

any *humbler* than you used to be; that you are more amiable, more charitable, more anxious to see good in others, more eager to deny and efface yourself for the sake of your fellow-men?"

"Sir," interposed Mr. Claggett, as his nephew hesitated and looked rather uncomfortable, "I protest against this cross-examination. It is, under the circumstances, entirely unprecedented and out of place."

"I don't mind, uncle," said Mr. Gosling, recovering himself. "If Mr. Miller finds any pleasure in taunting me with my Christian profession, I think I have enough humility to take it patiently."

"I hope you are answered, Sir," exclaimed Mr. Claggett, turning hotly to the minister.

"I cannot deny it," replied the minister, his dark eyes gleaming with amusement.

"Your nephew has given me a most instructive lesson in the theory and practice of conversion; and he must forgive me if, after seeing him in his converted state to-day, I am unable to help wondering what he was like before his conversion took place."

The calm, unruffled tone in which Mr. Miller made this remark was too much for Mr. Claggett's equanimity. The hot flush died out, and instead of it a look of bitter resentment overspread his features.

"Come, Andrew," he said, rising, with a smile of menace. "We have already intruded long enough. Mrs. Searle, we have the honour to wish you good afternoon. Miss Dabbs——"

With the stiffest of handshakes, the visitors took leave of their hostess; while poor Miss Dabbs, who would willingly have participated in a more cordial saluta-

tion, was put off with the stiffest of bows. Mr. Miller rose, and bowed too; but of this no notice was taken, and the moment afterwards he was again alone with the two ladies.

"Like uncle like nephew!" exclaimed Mrs. Searle, with an indignant snort. "Andrew, indeed; I'll teach the man to bring his Andrews into my drawing-room. However, you gave 'em as good as they brought, Mr. Miller, I will say that much, an' now let's talk of something else."

"It only wanted this!" said Mr. Claggett, as he and Andrew went down the road together. "That man shall rue his insolence in that house to-day to the latest hour of his life."

CHAPTER IV.

THE STORM BURSTS.

Guy Miller and Mrs. Pottifer did not meet for some days after the ominous interview between Mrs. Ramsbottom and the Professor. Term was now drawing to an end, and entertainments were the order of the day. Much interest, too, was felt in the approaching conferment of degrees upon the half-dozen or so of distinguished men selected by the University for that honour; for the *Gazette* had announced that two Cabinet Ministers, a Brazilian beetle-hunter, a French

novelist who had just been non-elected at the Académie, an explorer from Central Asia, and an eminent American poet, whose remarkable volume, 'Sticks and Straws,' was setting all the critics by the ears, were on this occasion to be made Doctors in Civil Law. And for this solemnity Guy had received permission to stay 'up'; not that he cared particularly to see the function itself, but because Mrs. Pottifer asked him to stay, for her sake; while he, on his side, imagined that it was quite impossible to tear himself away from Mrs. Pottifer. Meanwhile, the weather continued brilliant; St. Mary's, full of sisters, cousins, and aunts, was at its very gayest; the lodging-house keepers reaped a big harvest, rejoicing greatly; and everybody who knew anybody gave garden-parties to everybody else.

It was at one of these very agreeable

réunions that, after a cruel separation of nearly a whole week, Guy found himself once more with Ianthe. But they were not alone; they met, but 'twas in a crowd. And for no less than half-an-hour was the unlucky youth condemned to entertain a variety of other ladies, while he was longing to get speech with his inamorata. Of course he knew nothing about the interference of Mrs. Ramsbottom, and was all the more perplexed when, as it appeared to him, Ianthe made no effort to second his endeavours.

"I declare I'm almost dying to see Bat Bendigo," murmured Miss Crewe, as, seated with a group of ladies under a spreading cedar-tree, she thoughtfully consumed an ice. "Have you ever read his 'Sticks and Straws,' Mrs. Jacobs?"

"Sticks and Straws!" repeated Mrs. Jacobs, with her shrill laugh and strongly-

marked German accent. "Vat is zat, Sticks and Straws?"

"It is the name of Bat Bendigo's last volume of poems," replied Hypatia. "They are quite different from any other poems ever published; in fact, I regard them as foreshadowing the Poetry of the Future. Ah, we have much to learn, believe me. In my view, you know, poetry must be free—free and unfettered. The wings of poetry must not be tied, else the very spirit of poetry itself is annihilated. At present, poetry is *not* free; it is hampered by such purely adventitious restrictions as Rhyme and Rhythm, and as long as such restrictions last, poetry, which is the natural language of freedom, is in chains. Don't you agree with me, Mr. Miller?"

"But I t'ought rhyme and rhythm vas ze very essence of boetry," interrupted

Mrs. Jacobs, before Guy could speak. "You might as vell talk about a house vizout roofs and valls. Vat is it like, zen, zis boetry about sticks and straws?"

"Listen," replied Hypatia. "I will repeat you some of it. The poem is entitled 'The Arising of the Shapes,' and begins thus:

"'The shapes arise!

I see them. Here they come, tumbling.

The shapes of pitchforks, toasting-forks, pianos, crowbars, wainscots, corkscrews, battle-axes, butchers' blocks, pudding-cloths, gridirons, fire-irons, flat-irons, waffle-tins, glue-pots, fancy-articles, and the Bland Coinage Act.

See how they leap, hop, dance, vault, caper.

The vision of me, the Democrat.

Pens of live pork, the killing-hammer, the hog-hook, the scalder's tub, gutting, the cleaver, the packer's maul, and the plenteous winter-work of pork-packing.

Where is your respectability now? Where are your pulpits, reading-desks, choir-stalls, hymn-books, prayer-books, cushions to read upon, cushions to sit upon, texts, responses, churchwardens, pew-openers, hassocks, organ-blowers, pitch-pipes and collection-plates?

Where are your jibes of being now?

Where are your cavils, satires, flings, wipes, skits, squibs, quips, taunts, lampoons, libels, pasquinades, differences of opinion?

My name is Bat Bendigo. Boo-hoo!"

"But he must be mad, zis Bendigo," exclaimed Mrs. Jacobs, after a long pause of speechless astonishment. "You do not mean to say, Miss Crewe, zat you *admire* all zat insane rubbish?"

"I do admire it, most fervently," replied Hypatia, with exaltation.

"But zere is no sense in it!" screamed Mrs. Jacobs. "Vat does ze man mean viz his long catalogue of ironmongery and nonsense? Bah! he must be a lunatic, and his publisher must be a big fool. Comm, Mrs. Pottifer, tell us some good news. How is ze Professor to-day?"

"He is here, somewhere," answered Mrs. Pottifer, with rather a forced smile. "But, do you know, Mrs. Jacobs, I can't

help rather liking Mr. Bendigo's poems. I'm afraid I almost agree with Miss Crewe. Of course they're crude, and not what one's ears are accustomed to; but don't you think they savour somewhat of the prophetic?"

"Ze prophetic?" cried Mrs. Jacobs, in her shrill tones. "Vat vill ze man prophesy, zen, about his toasting-forks and his pig-sticking? *Ach*, he is mad, mad! No — for prophecy, I prefer ze prophet Isaiah, or his friend—vat you call him?—Ezekiel. Zey could write boetry well enough. But zis foolish Bendigo——"

"But don't you think there is something of the seer about him?" put in Guy, rather mischievously. "He takes a very wide view of things, surely — nothing seems to escape him. His knowledge of technicalities must be encyclopædic."

"*Ach!* Let us talk of somesing else," exclaimed Mrs. Jacobs. "I cannot understand your Bendigo, Miss Crewe. Let us leave ze boetry of ze future to our bosterities. I fail to interest myself in it. It is too stupid even to make me laugh."

Hypatia heaved a lenient, gentle sigh, and leant back in her chair resignedly. Guy made another attempt to catch Ianthe's eye, and failed. At last a lady who had not spoken before, observed:

"And who are the other candidates for the degree?"

"Zere are som meenisters of ze Cabinet—so I hear," replied Mrs. Jacobs. "And one or two travellers of gr-reat reputation; scientific men, you know. Von has discovered forty new species of cockroaches, and ze ozzer——"

"Cockroaches!" exclaimed a fat old lady with a double-eyeglass, horrified.

"Beetles, perhaps," suggested Guy, indifferently.

"*Ach*, yes," answered Mrs. Jacobs; "forty new species of black beetles. And ze ozzer has lived for tree years in Central-Asien on powdered horse-flesh and peat-fuel, vizout ever vonce being able to vash his face."

"Dear me!" exclaimed the fat old lady, innocently. "How very disagreeable!"

"Many are the ways by which men achieve fame," remarked Guy.

"It is all true," rejoined Mrs. Jacobs; "Mr. Urquhart vas telling me about zem yesterday. And for zat zey shall be made Doctors in Civil Law."

"But when can they have had time for studying civil law?" asked the old lady, who (as may be seen) was only a visitor at St. Mary's.

"*Gott*—zey know nossing—nossing!"

cried Mrs. Jacobs, in her shrillest tones. "It is not for zat. It is only gompliment, you know. You see, it is like zis. You are distinguished man; na, University cannot make you my-lord or Sir, cannot give you Bath, only has degrees; so never mind whezzer you know anysing about law or not, zat makes nossing; you have done somesing famous, and so zey make you lawyer, and you may vear a fine robe of scarlet viz pink sleeves."

"How very strange," remarked the old lady again, with a bewildered air.

"The artistic combination of scarlet and pink has always struck me as most happily emblematical of the congruity between the services and their reward," put in Guy. "Don't you think so, Mrs. Ramsbottom?"

Now Mrs. Ramsbottom, generally a very talkative person, had hitherto pre-

served rigorous and unbroken silence. She was there, in fact, as a spectator, and the persons over whom she was mounting guard were of course no others than Mrs. Pottifer and Guy. Of this fact Mrs. Pottifer was necessarily quite aware, as we shall see later ; but Guy had no suspicion of it whatever, and only addressed the question to Mrs. Ramsbottom from a half-mischievous desire to draw the old woman out for the entertainment of the company at large.

"I cannot say I have ever thought about the subject, Mr. Miller," answered Mrs. Ramsbottom, in an icy tone. She was astounded at the youth's impudence in speaking to her, and all the more indignant because she hadn't the faintest notion what he meant.

"Have you seen Mr. Irwin yet?" inquired the old lady, turning with a

benevolent expression to Mrs. Ramsbottom. Now Mr. Irwin was the guest of the afternoon; a poet of respectable standing, author of 'The Dirge of Tartarus,' 'Diamond Ditties,' 'Glimpses in the Gloaming,' and various other productions, all daintily mystic, much abused by critics, but commanding a most satisfactory sale, nevertheless; and of course everybody present was very anxious to be introduced to the great man.

"I was not aware he had arrived," answered Mrs. Ramsbottom loftily. "I should certainly have been informed of the fact if he had."

"*Ach*, zere he is!" cried Mrs. Jacobs, as a young-looking man with long, curling hair, faultlessly dressed, passed at a little distance in attendance upon two ladies. "Yes, *he* is poet, now—not like your Bat Bendigo viz his nonsense-trash, you see."

All the party looked up with interest; but the expectant expression on Mrs. Ramsbottom's large face was visibly dashed with chagrin as the gentleman and his companions, one of whom was the hostess of the day, disappeared into another part of the garden.

"How very peculiar of Lady Latimer not to introduce him!" remarked the Readeress in Prehistoric Heraldry, much displeased. The omission was a most indefensible slight upon her dignity, and she could not conceal her resentment.

"No doubt he has only just arrived, you know," suggested the fat old lady, as she surveyed the angry countenance of Mrs. Ramsbottom with a most irritatingly placid smile. "And I dare say there are numbers of people here whom Lady Latimer is obliged to present him to,

from their position in the place," she added, by way of soothing the other lady's indignation.

This made Mrs. Ramsbottom turn nearly black with wrath. Guy tittered, and even the classical Hypatia smiled. Then, as though unable to bear herself any longer, the outraged matron struggled to her feet, and walked off with more than her accustomed stateliness. No sooner, however, had she turned her back, than Lady Latimer herself was seen approaching the group, accompanied by a stoutish, grizzled man, with a rough chin and one of the very worst-fitting frock-coats Guy thought he had ever seen.

"Mrs. Fotheringay," she said, addressing the fat old lady, "allow me to present Mr. Cyril Irwin. Miss Crewe — Mr. Irwin. Mrs. Pottifer, Mr. Miller"—and

so on. Thus were the coveted introductions made at last.

"Very thirsty weather, this," remarked the poet, leaning on his stick in front of the seated ladies.

"Isn't it," assented Lady Latimer, smiling. "We shall have some more ices directly."

"Were you ever in St. Mary's before, Mr. Irwin?" ventured Hypatia tentatively.

"Never in my life," replied the poet. "Seems a pretty place, as far as I can judge; but how shockingly the streets are paved! Almost makes one suspect an unholy compact between the local shoemakers and the Local Board. Your cobblestones here are enough to lame a man for life."

"Ah—I suppose some of the streets *are* rather rough," said Hypatia, a little disconcerted. "But then think of the

traditions, the associations, of the place. Surely you will admit that there is something soul-inspiring in these?"

"Sole-torturing is the only experience I met with on my way here," answered the poet, with a short, brusque laugh. Hypatia's eyes expressed a certain gentle horror, while Mrs. Jacobs, staring and open-mouthed, would have broken out into one of her shrillest utterances, only that she did not quite catch the poet's disgraceful pun. At this moment Guy cast an appealing glance in the direction of Ianthe. She responded now willingly enough, and by dint of a little ingenuity the two managed to separate themselves from the group and reach a part of the gardens where for a few minutes they could converse without serious fear of being overlooked.

"And now, Ianthe," he said, "tell me

all about it. How is it I haven't seen you for such an age? Why have you avoided me? Why wouldn't you even look at me just now?"

"Guy," she answered, "there has been great trouble at home."

"Trouble?" he repeated sharply. "What sort of trouble?"

"With my husband," said Ianthe, in a low voice. "Listen to me, Guy. We have only a very few minutes to talk, and we are incurring a most dreadful risk at this very moment. You know my husband never suspected anything about our—our friendship——"

"Oh, call it friendship, by all means," put in Guy rather bitterly.

"Hush!" said Ianthe. "We understand what we mean by it. Let that suffice. But some days ago, while you and I were actually sitting together in

the Parks, Mrs. Ramsbottom went and told my husband all about it. I mean all she knew. She has been watching us, Guy, and I am afraid others have too. And when she had gone he came to me and said he felt as though the very heavens had fallen. He had had no suspicions—absolutely none—he couldn't even understand what she was driving at, at first. But she made it all clear enough, and now there's to be an end of everything."

Guy was struck dumb. He turned pale with misery, and waited to hear what she would say next.

"He talked to me in the most dreadful way," resumed Ianthe, after a moment's pause. "He said I had been false to him for weeks, and that he could no longer trust me with my liberty. And he said things about you which were very hard

to listen to. O Guy, you know I thought we were wrong from the beginning. I deceived myself, and so deceived my husband too. The curse has come upon me at last."

"It is all that horrible old woman's doing," answered Guy hotly. "She has made all the mischief. The Professor would never have minded our being together if she hadn't put it into his head."

"That may be," said Ianthe; "but I do believe he has been a little uneasy for some time. He has noticed that I went out more frequently, and seemed to take less interest in his work. I am afraid all our pleasant days are over, Guy. I might have known they couldn't last for ever."

A pause ensued, during which Guy racked his brains to find some way out of

the difficulty. Then he asked, rather nervously:

"But what did you say when the Professor spoke to you like this?"

"I told him he was very cruel and quite wrong," replied Ianthe. "I reminded him that I had told him from the very first how fond I was of you, and how I liked being with you, and that he had never made any objection whatever. And now, I said, after throwing us together in this way for weeks, you suddenly turn round and say we are never to meet each other again. I made a strong point there. He is acting very tyrannically, I think, and has shown very little consideration for me. But of course he is quite within his rights, you must remember. He is my master, and I have to do what he tells me. Only it is dreadfully hard, coming upon me as it does so suddenly."

"How shall we bear it?" uttered Guy, under his breath.

"We must bear it as best we may," said Ianthe, with forced calm. "My life is spoilt—I look forward to the future with despair. But that is not the worst. My great trouble is that I have wrecked *your* life; unless, indeed, you are ever able to find consolation apart from me. But Guy, dear Guy; you will be faithful to me, will you not?"

"For ever," answered the lad solemnly. "You know it as well as I do."

"And after all," resumed Ianthe, in a more hopeful tone, "we needn't make things out worse than they really are. Nobody can separate us absolutely, not even my husband. We shall still see each other; and perhaps, you know, if we only have patience, and don't do anything imprudent meanwhile, our present

restrictions may be relaxed. The principal thing to be done now is to conciliate my husband. Nothing can be gained by irritating him; on the contrary, it would be the most fatal policy we could adopt. I would even try and conciliate Mrs. Ramsbottom herself, if I thought it would do any good. And, Guy, don't avoid my husband; don't look or act, I mean, as though you had anything to be ashamed of, or had any idea that he was angry with you. You are not supposed to know it, in fact; and I've no reason to suppose that he's going to say anything about it to you himself."

Guy assented to all this vaguely enough, for he did not exactly grasp Ianthe's view of the situation, or quite see how he was to make advances to the Professor; but there was no time for entering upon arguments and explanations, and he therefore

contented himself with assuring her that he would be guided by her counsel in this and all other matters.

"Have you any plans for the Long?" asked Ianthe, after a moment's thought.

"No," said Guy. "At least, nothing definite. Have you?"

"We've been thinking of the Cumberland lakes," replied Ianthe, with some hesitation; "I don't think we're likely to go abroad. If we *were* to go to Derwentwater, for instance—or Windermere—some time in August—do you think it possible that you might be somewhere about there too?"

"Of course I might," assented Guy brightly. "Why not? And yet—I wonder whether it would be of any use. We should have the same obstacle between us there, you know."

"But it might be overcome, in a

measure," answered Ianthe. "Much would depend upon your—upon how you bear yourself towards him now. You *must* conciliate him, Guy. It is our only chance. If you could only manage to do that——"

"One can but try," said the lad, not very hopefully. "The worst of it is I don't know how to set about it. I scarcely ever see him, and even when I do we have so little in common, so little to say to each other——"

"Oh, but you must," urged Ianthe. "It is worth an effort. I *cannot* give you up, Guy. I know I began by saying that everything was over between us, but when it comes to the point it seems impossible. And I will help you. The most important thing is to avoid me, you know, and to disprove everything that Mrs. Ramsbottom has said. We must make him think that she has exaggerated

everything fearfully, and is nothing but an old mischief-maker. And then, if you can get a chance, lead him to talk about his favourite subjects, and show all the interest in them possible. And if ever he does speak to you about me, don't try and deny it, or look as if there were anything to be ashamed of, but just speak of our friendship as a matter of course, as something, you know, that he himself approves of—something to be taken for granted, ignoring all suspicion of wrong—something that you are grateful to *him* for allowing. That's the proper line to take, and if I know him well his confidence will be soon restored."

Guy felt rather shocked. Ianthe puzzled him ; her plan seemed not only uncandid, but inconsistent with itself. And yet it was impossible for him to refuse all co-operation.

"Ianthe," he said, stopping in his walk, "what can be done, shall be done. Don't think me less loving or less devoted than yourself. It's hard, very hard, to be driven to such subterfuges; but needs must, under certain circumstances."

"I knew you would," said Ianthe, a smile of happiness playing round her lips. "And now, Guy—dearest Guy—we must separate, and join the others. I tremble to think what a risk we've been running. Come—let this be good-bye—good-bye till I manage to communicate with you again."

She faced round, and stood in front of him, his hands tightly clasped in hers, and her eyes dimmed with tears. Guy bent his head over her, silently. He tried to speak, but no sound came; and thus they stood, just for one brief moment. But brief as it was, that moment was years too long.

A light crunching of the gravel path at no great distance suddenly made their hearts stop. They both started violently, and, glancing sideways, saw Mrs. Ramsbottom disappearing round the corner; while Professor Pottifer—grim, pale, and stern—came stalking slowly and deliberately in their direction.

Ianthe caught her breath, turned as white as a sheet, and called up a forced, unnatural smile. Guy simply faced the angry husband, and waited. It was a bad moment for both of them.

The Professor advanced to the side of his wife, taking, so far, no notice whatever of Guy.

"Ianthe," he said coldly, "you have been missed. Go and join Mrs. Ramsbottom upon the lawn."

Never had a few, simple, commonplace words sounded so terrifying in her

ears. Never had her husband appeared to her so terrible; no, not even when he had first spoken to her under the promptings of Mrs. Ramsbottom. She felt like a convicted criminal before the judge; and, silent and trembling, she moved away—unable to speak, her brain whirling, the fair, sunny scene around her blotted out, as it were, and leaving her, a wretched, lonely, guilty creature, face to face with herself in a desert of the blankest misery.

Then he turned towards Guy, and the two regarded each other steadfastly for a second or so. At last he said, with an apparent indifference in his tone a thousand times more galling than the bitterest invective could have been:

"I do not intend, Mr.—a—Miller, I believe—to waste any time in dwelling upon your disreputable behaviour during the last few weeks. Your character and

reputation have no interest whatever for me personally. Each man acts according to his nature, and you have been acting, no doubt, in accordance with yours. I have only one thing to say; I forbid you to return to the University after the Long vacation."

Guy had flushed with the deepest mortification he had ever felt at the scornful words in which the Professor had opened his remarks. The concluding sentence, however, came to his assistance, in that it aroused in him a sensation of blank astonishment, immediately followed by an almost irresistible desire to smile.

"May I ask what authority you have for such an extraordinary prohibition?" he asked, very calmly, though his heart beat fast.

"I am not so ignorant of the University statutes as to claim any formal prerogative

in the matter," replied the Professor. "I simply warn you not to return. If you do —if you attempt to, rather—I shall take such measures as are open to me to prevent it. I have the honour of my position, and the honour of my family, to protect; and I tell you, quite frankly, that, if you neglect my warning, I will expose your baseness to the whole world."

"You cannot seriously expect me to sacrifice my whole future to such a threat as that," rejoined Guy, recovering himself. The extravagance of the Professor's demand put him on his mettle, and gave him an advantage he was not slow to take. "You can make mischief if you wish, but you have not the slightest power over me in any way. The Vice-Chancellor himself couldn't send me down without a sufficient cause."

"I have no time to argue with you,

Mr. Miller," said the Professor, coldly. "I do not intend you to come up again, that is all. Try to, if you choose. I don't think you will try, because in my view you are a coward, as well as the most dishonourable young man of my acquaintance; but if you do, I shall have to act differently. And now I will leave you to your thoughts."

Ianthe's conciliation-plan suddenly shot through Guy's head at this juncture, and went very near upsetting his gravity. Suppose he were to introduce an allusion to the Krakatoan earthquakes, and avow an absorbing interest in azimuths? The incongruity was too much for him; he bit his lip, but nothing on earth could have prevented the amused smile which, in spite of all his efforts, broke out upon his face.

"I should certainly be a coward if *you*

could frighten me," he said, with an audacious little bow. "There is no need to prolong the discussion, Professor Pottifer; I shall come up to St. Mary's at the beginning of next term as usual, and of that I give *you* warning, in return for yours."

The Professor turned on his heel, and walked slowly away in the direction from which he had come, imagining, of course, that Guy would slink off elsewhere. To his profound astonishment and disgust, however, the graceless youth had the effrontery to accompany him; so that two minutes afterwards he found himself approaching a large group that was gathered upon the lawn, in apparently amicable companionship with the undergraduate he had just been condemning to expulsion.

Ianthe, Guy noticed at a glance, was

not there. Mrs. Ramsbottom was, however, so that the former had either managed to escape from her in the meantime or had never joined her at all. The expression of the old woman's face as she caught sight of the Professor and Master Guy advancing side by side was, for the moment, a picture. "Well, I never!" she ejaculated under her breath. Could it be possible that the man was still blind to what his own eyes had seen—that the lovers had succeeded in bamboozling him, and that he was actually on terms of friendship with the young scapegrace by his side? The Professor looked grim and gaunt enough, but scarcely more so than usual; while Guy seemed calm and cheerful, apparently quite uncrushed by anything that might have passed between them. The whole thing was a mystery, and Mrs. Ramsbottom felt both angry and

perplexed; which Guy at once discerned, and of course enjoyed amazingly.

The Professor, evidently taken aback by the absence of his wife, and unspeakably annoyed at Guy's audacity in appearing in public in his company, flashed a glance at Mrs. Ramsbottom, and then abruptly walked off in search of Ianthe. Guy, seeing a vacant seat next to that occupied by the indignant matron, yielded to the prompting of the devil and took it. It was a simple action enough; but had a mine suddenly exploded by her side, Mrs. Ramsbottom could scarcely have been more dumbfoundered. This, indeed, was impudence truly sublime. Every ribbon in her bonnet quivered audibly, in protest against such astounding presumption; her breath came quick and short; she fairly trembled in her astonishment and anger. Guy, on his part, recognised all these

storm-signals with mischievous delight, and immediately made up his mind to extract all the amusement possible from putting in force the conciliation-policy which poor Ianthe, in her ignorance and distraction of mind, had avowed herself willing to adopt towards the terrible female who was the foe of both him and her.

"Mrs. Ramsbottom," he said, smilingly, "don't you always feel sorry when term comes to an end? I do."

"Do you indeed?" replied the lady, with a snort. She could have boxed his ears with pleasure, but of course was compelled to repress her desire, and the necessity for submitting to the outrage of his address in public almost put her beside herself with wrath.

"Yes; the breaking up of all one's associations, you know, and that kind of

thing," said Guy demurely. "And the parting with all one's friends."

"Ah! I dare say," retorted Mrs. Ramsbottom grimly. "But then you see I don't know any of your friends."

Which remark had no relevancy whatever; but it sounded cutting, or Mrs. Ramsbottom hoped it did; and as she uttered it she turned her head away, as though to enter into conversation with the people on her left. But unluckily they were all talking and laughing very earnestly among themselves, and seemed quite unconscious of her propinquity.

"Not know any of my friends, Mrs. Ramsbottom!" exclaimed Guy, with well-acted deprecation. "Oh, come; that won't do at all. Why, you're very intimate with the Pottifers, to begin with. The Professor thinks no end of you, I'm sure, and always defers to your opinion."

Mrs. Ramsbottom reddened furiously, and stared in blank amazement at the speaker.

"One would think you were in the Professor's confidence," she said, in the most freezing tone, as she threw herself back in her chair, and twirled her great red sunshade angrily. Her indignation at being badgered by this bit of an undergraduate was intense, and she would have given anything to be able to administer a decisive snub. But she was not ready in the matter of repartee, and for the present she felt herself at his mercy.

"Oh no," replied Guy modestly. "Of course a man of his age can't feel much interest in young people; one doesn't expect it. With you, of course, it's a different matter. Does he ever talk seismology to you, Mrs. Ramsbottom? We all know how fond you are of science,

and there's nothing so calculated to win the Professor's—confidence—as to show an intelligent interest in his pet subject."

Mrs. Ramsbottom began to breathe stertorously, like a volcano preparing for an eruption. What with Guy's calm impudence, and her own uncertainty as to what had passed between him and the Professor, the good lady was almost driven frantic, and had not sufficient self-control to hide it. Guy got bolder, and went on another tack.

"What a very quaint sort of person Mr. Irwin is, isn't he? Of course you have been introduced. Not at all like the poet of popular imagination. Have you noticed what a very shabby hat he has on?"

"I can't say I have," replied Mrs. Ramsbottom, stiffly, though much relieved at the change of subject. "He struck me

as being a singularly handsome, well-appointed man."

"But his conversation!" resumed Guy. "When we were introduced to him—Mrs. Pottifer, Miss Crewe, and one or two others—he talked of nothing but the cobblestones in the streets, and hinted pretty plainly that he would like a drink. Perhaps you were more fortunate. What did he talk about to you?"

"Really, I cannot undertake to repeat Mr. Irwin's remarks for your benefit," replied Mrs. Ramsbottom, fencing. "When you are a little older, you know, you will understand that such a practice is not permissible in good society. Mr. Irwin is a man of genius, and I have always paid him the admiration which is his due."

"And does your admiration extend to that large red satin scarf he is exhibiting

to-day?" inquired Guy, with a twinkle in his eye.

"I have no idea what you are referring to," snapped Mrs. Ramsbottom, momentarily off her guard. "Mr. Irwin is not wearing anything of the sort."

Just then, Mr. Irwin himself, accompanied by Professor and Mrs. Pottifer and Lady Latimer, appeared in the distance, walking slowly across the lawn.

"Our friends the Pottifers, I see," murmured Guy indifferently. "What a very charming and intelligent person Mrs. Pottifer is, isn't she?"

"It's nothing to you if she is," retorted Mrs. Ramsbottom, sharply.

"Do you really think so?" answered Guy, in accents of mild surprise. "It seems to me, on the contrary, that the presence of pure and gracious women in our midst is, morally, as health-giving as

that of ozone in the atmosphere; and that we ought to be grateful for them accordingly. Because there are so many women who are different; women jealous of the superior attractions of the others, scandal-mongers, mischief-makers, and such-like, whose influence is as poisonous as sewer-gas. So that we ought to be all the more grateful for those who are good and kind, and try to make other people happy. Now you, of all people, dear Mrs. Ramsbottom, with your long experience of the world, ought to agree with me here. Doesn't it strike you——"

"Dear me, who is that very shabby-looking man with Lady Latimer?" interrupted Mrs. Ramsbottom, in a louder key than she intended. Her face was purple with fury, and she could think of no other way to stop Guy's placid impertinences than to cut him short with the first remark

that came into her head. Guy, however, had had his say, and accepted the interruption most amiably.

"That?" he said, with a smile. "Why, that is Mr. Irwin, the poet. I thought you said you had conversed with him. You see I was right about the red tie."

"*That* Mr. Irwin!" exclaimed the discomfited matron, off her guard once more.

"To be sure," replied Guy. "You don't mean to say you've been talking to somebody else under the impression that —oh, what fun!"

Then he burst into a fit of the gayest laughter, and, what was worse, several other people who had overheard them smiled audibly too. This was more than the persecuted old woman could stand. The fact was that she had never been presented to the poet at all, and, rather

than acknowledge the omission, had made a pretence to the contrary—which Guy had now exposed. She therefore left her seat, and marched boldly up to the advancing group; while Guy, bland and courteous, walked calmly by her side, affecting the most perfect unconsciousness that his apparently polite attention was causing Mrs. Ramsbottom the severest attack of impotent fury she had suffered from that day.

"I've scarcely seen you all the afternoon," remarked Lady Latimer, smiling, as Mrs. Ramsbottom met them. "You and Mr. Miller seem quite to have been monopolizing each other. You have met Mr. Irwin, I think, Mr. Miller?"

"Yes, thanks," said Guy, pleasantly, "I have had that pleasure."

"The Professor has been looking for you, I think, Mrs. Ramsbottom," con-

tinued Lady Latimer. "Professor Pottifer, I mean. He and Mr. Irwin have been having such an interesting discussion —upon the question whether the prevalence of earthquakes in a given country is favourable to the development of poetic genius among the inhabitants. Quite a new idea, isn't it? A capital subject for an essay, now; don't you think so?"

"Excellent," remarked Guy, with a laugh. "I'll read it up during the vacation, and write an article on it for the Mag. next term."

He cast a meaning glance at Ianthe as he said this. She was looking horribly pale and ill, but a bright gleam shot out of her eyes in acknowledgment of Guy's message, which she seemed perfectly to recognise and understand. His little triumph was now almost complete. He had defied the Professor in private and in

public; he had revenged himself on Mrs. Ramsbottom by teasing her till she had nearly cried with vexation; he had succeeded in appearing before the entire company as on the best of terms with both; and now he had actually made a most important communication to Ianthe in the very face of her angry husband. One more thing he wanted—an opportunity of speaking to her unheard. And fate was kind to him. It was decreed that he should have his wish.

Just then Dr. Jacobs came shuffling up, and addressed some remark to Mr. Irwin about the poetry of the Accadians. Mr. Irwin, who had never heard of Accadian poetry before, appealed to Professor Pottifer; and in less than two minutes the three gentlemen were in the thick of an animated discussion, not one of them having the slightest acquaintance with the

subjects of the other two. Lady Latimer, seeing them so happily engaged, entered into conversation with Mrs. Ramsbottom, as they strolled slowly towards the house; other groups formed, and, as people passed to and fro across the lawn in front of them, an opportunity was offered to Guy to say a few words to Ianthe.

It was she who spoke first.

"You have seen him?" she uttered, in a hollow whisper.

Guy inclined his head.

"What did he say?"

"Forbad me to come up next term."

"But he can't! He hasn't the power!"

"I know that. So does he."

"Then—then it's absurd."

"No doubt; but he threatened a public scandal if I did."

Ianthe turned whiter than ever.

"He must be mad," she whispered,

miserably. "What did you say to that?"

"Laughed—no, smiled—at him. Defied him."

"Then you will come up, in spite of it?"

"Rather."

"You mean it? Bless you for that, Guy. I could never, never forgive you if you were to forsake me now. Don't come any nearer—he may look round any moment. But you will come back next term? You swear it?"

"I swear it. Nothing shall prevent me."

"Thanks—thanks. I shall never change, Guy. Even if we didn't meet for years I should love you always—always."

"And I you."

"Remember your promise."

"I am not likely to forget it."

"Were you to break it, you would break my heart—and then I should try and kill my love for you by main force. But you won't, I know. And now—Good-bye."

"Good-bye—Ianthe."

"God bless you ever!" she exclaimed under her breath. "Oh, how wretched I am. I wish that someone would put a bullet through my head."

Guy half thought for a moment that she was going to faint; but she did not. With one last glance, she turned her head away, and walked steadily towards her husband; while Guy strode back to college.

CHAPTER V.

MR. CLAGGETT'S TRUMP CARD.

About this time a very unsettled and disagreeable atmosphere began to pervade the congregation worshipping in Queen Street Chapel. A thoroughly uneasy feeling prevailed amongst the members. Vague rumours floated about of dissensions in high quarters, and conflicting as these rumours undoubtedly were, there was a general sense of disquiet, a fearful looking-for of some indefinite calamity, and an uncomfortable distrust of the immediate future which went far to counteract the almost universal gratification at the

success attending the bazaar. Nobody was able to explain this, but everybody felt it. No sooner had the excitement of the festivities passed away than a reaction took its place. It was like the lurid sky and oppressive air which sometimes succeed a day of warmth and sunshine, and too often prove the harbinger of a heavy thunderstorm. And there were many who looked forward to the now imminent Annual Church Meeting with mingled apprehension and curiosity, as affording the most natural opportunity for the threatened tempest to break over their heads in earnest.

That there was division in the church was now an undisputed fact. Up till then there had been no scandal — no open rupture; but the consciousness that division existed was prevalent in every pew, and the minister could

scarcely preach a sermon which was not regarded as a party manifesto, and canvassed and criticised accordingly. One Sunday, for example, he took for his text the words, "For all are not Israel who are of Israel." At the conclusion of the service, as the congregation were leaving the chapel doors, a simple-minded member remarked to a somewhat subtler friend — the fresh breeze meeting them from the sea at the street corner,—

"The wind still sets in the same quarter, don't it, Mr. Barton?"

"Ay, that it do," replied Mr. Barton, sententiously; "inside the chapel as well as out."

It was, in fact, clear to everyone that this state of things could not last for long, and that the sooner the inevitable explosion came the better. And yet, as we have

said, no one seemed to know what the matter really was. Outwardly, at any rate, everything was flourishing. The season, from the chapel-members' standpoint, had been so far a brilliant one. Never had there been fuller congregations or more satisfactory collections. Never had the minister preached with more effect, or gained more popularity among the visitors. And now the debt upon the chapel had been wiped off, and that by a bazaar which had ranked high amid the gala doings of the year. What, then, was wrong? What more could a fashionable Congregational Church require than to stand thus prominently forward in the eyes of the world—rich, popular, and successful? Did they not boast a pastor of acknowledged eloquence and culture, whose ministrations filled the pews and swelled the treasury? Were not the

deacons and the pew-openers at their wits' end to accommodate the strangers who besieged their doors? Surely, if tried by such tests as these, the Queen Street Chapel was a sanctuary of the highest eminence, a city set upon the loftiest of hills, a burning and a shining light whose radiance could not be hid. And yet there was scarcely one of its members who did not await the approaching Annual Church Meeting without an instinctive presentiment that something very strange was destined to occur.

At last the eventful day arrived, and the attendance was unusually large. Scarcely a seat was unoccupied, for everybody felt that a crisis of some sort was at hand, and a certain nervous flutter and subdued excitement, not perhaps wholly unpleasurable, was easily to be discerned among the ladies. By ten minutes before

the hour announced for the commencement of the proceedings the place was full, and a buzz of whispering, which had a sort of week-day effect, pervaded the luxurious pews. Then, as the clock chimed the half-hour, the Rev. Robert Miller emerged from his vestry-door, mounted the daïs, and took the chair in due form.

A sudden silence fell upon the assembly, during which the deacons, Mr. Gervoise and Mr. Searle, moved forward and took their seats on either side of the minister. The supreme moment was at hand. Then Mr. Miller rose to his feet, and in a low, clear voice called upon his senior deacon to engage in prayer.

It was not, perhaps, very usual for the congregation to experience much intensity of devotion during the preliminary exercise at meetings of a partly secular nature, such

as the one we are describing. The portentous solemnity, however, with which Mr. Gervoise spread his large white handkerchief upon the floor preparatory to the assumption of a kneeling posture, and the prolonged pause which ensued before he uttered the first words of his supplication, produced a little thrill of expectancy among the worshippers, which rose to something like suppressed excitement as the banker proceeded to invoke a spirit of "concord and unity" upon the deliberations that were to follow, and to pray that "nothing might disturb the Christian harmony of their convocation." This was at once accepted as a warning of what might happen, and people rose from their knees in full anticipation of a fray. Then a hymn was given out—a composition in which there was much energetic metaphor of somewhat bellicose colouring, and the

congregation shouted it lustily, as though it had been a war-song. The voice of Mr. Searle, in particular, was loudly and distinctly heard. To the junior deacon, as, with open mouth and eyes now devotionally closed and now defiantly glaring round him, he led the tune, the troops of Midian meant Mr. Claggett and the Opposition generally, whom it was the duty and the intention of God's people—the Government, in other words, represented by Mr. Miller and his two deacons—to smite on hip and thigh. How Mr. Claggett and Mr. Boyce interpreted the same figures would be a delicate question. Both were present, though seated at a considerable distance from each other; and it was pretty generally felt that both intended to make themselves particularly disagreeable before the affair was over.

Then everybody sat down, and there

ensued that inevitable process of rustling, fidgeting, breath-drawing, and blowing of noses without which no Dissenting congregation ever did, or probably ever will, pass from one stage of any service to the next. The rising of the minister, however, with a slip of paper in his hand soon put a stop to this, and the traditional pin might easily have been heard to drop as he calmly faced the people and began his speech.

Not, indeed, that he had very much to say. He only introduced the business of the meeting in a few short sentences, and called upon the Treasurer, Mr. Henry Gervoise, to make his financial report. Mr. Gervoise accordingly rose, and in his grave, shy manner proceeded to the execution of his task. The year, he said, had, from a financial standpoint, been exceedingly satisfactory. Pew-rents had in-

creased, and the various agencies in connection with the church had shown a most gratifying activity. This, no doubt, was due in no small measure to the liberal response which their appeals for help had met with, and he congratulated the members upon the generosity that had enabled them to extend their benevolent and evangelistic enterprises in so many directions. Above all, the debt upon their building had, through the self-sacrificing devotion and energy of the ladies of their congregation, been virtually wiped off, a result for which the thanks of all of them were due to the indefatigable promoters of the late bazaar.

Several heads were turned, at this juncture, in the direction of Mr. Claggett, as though expecting some audible protest, or sign of disapprobation. That gentleman, however, retained his equanimity

unperturbed; in fact, he appeared to some of his neighbours to be dozing.

Mr. Gervoise, continuing, then went into further particulars of a statistical nature, and gave an explanatory *resumé* of the balance-sheet, which, however valuable from an arithmetical point of view, did not interest the ladies very deeply. A few men said 'Hear, hear,' and drummed a little with their feet; otherwise the Report fell rather flat, and people began to wonder when the excitement was going to begin. But the Treasurer was not a man to be hurried. He plodded steadily on, giving its full value to every item, and dwelling, with a fine sense of equity, upon any point which in his opinion merited special emphasis. The operations of the Society for Promoting the Study of Counterpoint among Bathing-women, for instance, occupied him

several minutes; and he paid a high compliment—which also took some time—to the zeal and indefatigability displayed by the Secretary of the Mutual Improvement Association of Serious Tidewaiters. It was not until he had spoken for fully half an hour that Mr. Gervoise began deliberately to fold up his papers, and intimated that he thought there was nothing more to say. The Report and Accounts of the past twelve months were now before the meeting, and he proposed that they should be passed in the usual way.

"It is proposed by Mr. Gervoise," said the minister, "and seconded"—here he glanced for a moment at the junior deacon—"and seconded by Mr. Searle, that the Report and Accounts for the past year be adopted. Before putting the resolution to the vote, however, we shall be glad

to hear any remarks which members present may feel disposed to make upon it."

A pause ensued, during which everybody looked this way and that to see if anyone showed signs of accepting the invitation. For a few seconds there was silence. Then someone was heard to rise; and immediately all heads were turned in the direction of the sound. It was Mr. Claggett, and a wave of expectation passed through the whole assembly.

"I have only one question to put, Sir," said the lawyer, in an almost apologetic tone. "An item appears on the debit-side of these accounts described as the 'Pastor's Stipend.' No reference was made to this by the Treasurer, and perhaps none was necessary. It no doubt appears in every yearly balance-sheet as a matter of course. What I want, then,

to ask, is this: Are we to have no opportunity of discussing the Budget for the ensuing year?"

The two deacons glanced at each other with a perplexed air, and a hurried whisper passed between them across the chair. Then Mr. Gervoise got up.

"The accounts which have been laid before the meeting," he said, rather nervously, "relate to the past twelve months exclusively. It is not usual to lay any prospective proposals—anything in the form of a Budget—before members on these occasions."

"Then members have no opportunity of considering the expenditure or the revenues of the year upon which we are now entering?" rejoined Mr. Claggett, interrogatively.

"Well—er—no," replied Mr. Gervoise. "That is to say, the subject is not brought

formally before them for discussion. At the same time it is open to any member to initiate the consideration of any point of importance to the welfare of the church, should he see fit to do so, after all formal business has been disposed of."

"Thank you, Sir; that is all I wished to know," said Mr. Claggett, as he took his seat again.

People now began to wonder what the lawyer could be driving at. Some felt a vague sense of disappointment, as though they had been cheated of a scene; others, who had fully made up their minds to a racy attack on the bazaar, and were unaware of any other source of discord, began to suspect a somewhat deeper scheme; while others, again, who took a more serious view of things, were reassured by the lawyer's unexpected subsidence. The next few minutes were

occupied by questions on matters of detail, addressed by two or three church-members to the Treasurer, and answered in due course; then a lull ensued; and nobody, apparently, having anything more to say upon the subject, the resolution was put to the meeting in due form, and passed without opposition.

"That concludes all the formal business we have to bring before you on the present occasion," said Mr. Miller, as he was sitting down. "It is now open to any member present to make any inquiry, suggestion, or communication that may occur to him, bearing upon our common interests as a church and a congregation."

Mr. Claggett immediately rose in his place, and the general expectation of some exciting incident rose too. Every eye in the chapel was fastened upon him as, with consummate deliberation, he settled

his *pince-nez*, drew a handful of papers from his breast-pocket, and prepared to speak. It was evident to all that the event of the evening was now really about to occur, and a death-like stillness settled upon the whole assembly.

"Before proceeding to the main subject of my remarks," began Mr. Claggett, speaking in a rather low but perfectly distinct voice, "I have a suggestion to make. We have just been informed that the official business of this meeting is at an end. I think, therefore, that, such being the case, it is unnecessary for the chair to be filled any longer by its present occupant; and as the observations I have to offer will be found to possess a rather marked personal bearing upon himself, I suggest—only suggest, mind—that Mr. Miller be temporarily relieved of the presidency by our senior deacon."

Certainly, the excitement was beginning. A buzz of astonishment passed through the congregation, and indignant looks were cast at the audacious speaker. Mr. Searle flushed angrily, and even his milder colleague appeared surprised and shocked. The only man who preserved his serenity was the minister himself.

"If," said Mr. Miller, with the slightest possible smile upon his lips, "there is no objection on the part of the meeting, I shall be quite willing to adopt Mr. Claggett's proposal. Of course I have no idea in what way the observations he is about to make may apply personally to myself; still——"

Mr. Miller broke off rather abruptly, in response to a sharp pull at his coat-tails, administered by Mr. Searle.

"Don't you do it, Mr. Miller," whispered the junior deacon, excitedly.

"You'll be playin' the man's own game if you do. Call for a show of 'ands—that'll settle the question at once."

The advice seemed reasonable, and Mr. Miller adopted it.

"My friend Mr. Searle suggests that the proposal should be decided by a show of hands," he said, facing the people again. "All who are in favour of Mr. Claggett's suggestion will please signify the same in the usual manner."

About ten hands went up—hesitatingly.

"To the contrary," said Mr. Miller.

There was no hesitation this time. Every other man and woman in the chapel testified promptly and decisively in favour of the minister remaining where he was, and a little subdued cheer passed merrily from pew to pew. They had got the better of Mr. Claggett at the outset, anyhow, and the first step is always the most

important, as proverbial philosophy assures us.

"I am not myself aware," resumed Mr. Claggett with cutting mildness, as he glanced around, "of any special cause for jubilation at the rejection of my well-meant proposal. It may even be that there are some present who will eventually *regret*" —with an emphasis upon the word, followed by a very effective pause—"will eventually *regret* not having taken advantage of it. But, after all, it is a matter of no moment. My reason for making the suggestion was one of some delicacy, as I hinted at the time. What that reason actually was will soon be made clear to all. I need not, I think, recapitulate the explanation given by Mr. Gervoise when I asked him, a short time ago, whether any estimates would be laid before us for the ensuing year. It was not, he said,

the custom to produce anything in the nature of a Budget. Very good. But there are, I take it, judging from the Report and Accounts that we have just passed so very unanimously, certain items which will certainly appear in the Report and Accounts of a twelvemonth hence, and which with equal certainty will be provided for by the Treasurer in the estimates which, as a business man, he no doubt prepares in private though without laying them before us here. One of those items is described as the 'Pastor's Stipend.' Now, perhaps, you are beginning to see why I proposed just now that our present chairman should temporarily vacate his presidency. Sir, I beg to move that, in whatever estimates may be prepared of the incomings and outgoings of the year we begin to-day, no provision be made for the 'Pastor's Stipend' until

a judicial investigation be instituted into the present position and past history of this Foundation."

Had a bombshell suddenly exploded in their midst it could scarcely have produced completer stupefaction and amazement among his hearers than did these words of Mr. Claggett. For a moment no one spoke; it seemed almost as though no one even breathed. Then, as by one consent, a confused buzz and hum, rising here and there into angry and indignant exclamations, broke from the excited throng. Even Mr. Gervoise, mild and reserved as he naturally was, caught a share of the infection; while Mr. Searle, his face crimson and eyes protruding from their sockets, stared at the speaker with a look of enraged amusement. Again the only person who preserved his calmness was the minister himself. He sat perfectly

quiet, a slight frown of perplexity upon his brow, thoughtfully glancing from Mr. Claggett to the rest of the congregation, until a voice from the back of the building, urging that Mr. Claggett be no longer heard, made itself audible above the prevailing hubbub. Then he arose, and said very quietly :

"Order, order, if you please. Mr. Claggett has not yet finished his speech, and I appeal to you all, here present, to give him a patient hearing."

These words had their effect. The murmurs died away, and Mr. Claggett once more faced his audience.

"I seem to have taken you by surprise," he said, with a touch of somewhat grim humour. "You stand in need of an explanation, and I am now going to give it you. I shall not keep you long, and when I have finished what I have got to say you

shall yourselves be judges whether the motion that seems to have excited you so much is really as preposterous as you evidently think it is at present."

There was no interruption now. They were listening with all their ears.

"Ever since I joined this church," resumed Mr. Claggett, "I have been a very careful listener to everything that has passed within its walls, and a very careful observer of much that might, in another person, have made but little impression upon his mind. And my observation soon taught me this much: that there was division among us; that the harmony which made so fair a show before the world was only skin-deep; that there were deep and rankling sores under the surface, the sores of party-spirit, jealousy, rancour, and seething discontent. That was what my observations taught me.

Then, what did I hear when I came to chapel? Sermons—sermons of marked eloquence and ability. I paid close attention to those sermons, and found that they were characterized by three special features among many others. I found, in the first place, that the preacher, sometimes tacitly, sometimes openly, based many of his teachings upon a full acceptance of the Darwinian theory of the universe. It was clear, to me, that he believed in evolution, and all the evolutionary hypothesis involves. In the second place, I found that he did not hold the plenary or verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures; the theory, I mean, that every word in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, was dictated by the Holy Spirit to the sacred writers, and is therefore intrinsically and necessarily true. In the third and last place, I found that he was opposed, tooth

and nail, to those doctrines of free grace, election, reprobation, and eternal punishment which may be comprehensively described as Calvinism. Mind, I am not criticising Mr. Miller's teachings; I express no opinion as to whether they are true or false; I am simply, and to the best of my ability, stating what I believe to be facts, and if Mr. Miller himself, or anybody else now present, considers that I have misrepresented him in the smallest particular, I stand open to immediate correction."

Mr. Claggett paused, but no one spoke. The minister sat with his eyes fixed steadfastly upon the speaker, and never moved a muscle.

"Very good," resumed the lawyer. "Then we may assume, for our present purpose, that I have done him no injustice. Now we come to another point,

which I will put in the form of a question. What is the basis of our existence as a church, a corporate community? In right of what do we meet within these walls, receive our endowment, and enjoy the privileges which are secured to us? The answer is a very simple one. It is the Trust-deed of Eusebius Appleyard, dated August 14th, 1662. Perhaps many of you have never seen, or even heard of, the document in question. Yet it is by virtue of this instrument that you exist to-day as the Queen Street Congregational Church, and enjoy the revenues which have come down to you from Eusebius Appleyard himself. You see, then, how important it is that you should be acquainted with the provisions of this Trust-deed, and that is why I am going to tell you something about it which will probably be

news to the majority of you, and which has, I fear, been wilfully concealed from you by those who are familiar with it Attached to the Trust-deed there is a schedule, setting forth in eight articles the doctrines which were to be preached under Mr. Appleyard's Foundation, and the preaching of which formed one of the conditions of his Trust. Three of these articles have a very serious interest for all of us to-day, and these three I will proceed to read, without note or comment, from a copy of the original document, seen and transcribed by myself :

ART. IV. *The Entire and Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures; that is, the Miraculous Communication of every Word, Letter, Jot, and Tittle therein contained by the Holy Spirit to the Mind of each Sacred Writer.*

ART. V.—*The Supreme Authority of the Holy Scriptures in all Questions of Spiritual and Moral Import, as well as their Infallibility as a Court of Appeal against the Oppositions of all Human Science and Philosophy of whatsoever Nature.*

ART. VIII.—*The Sovereign Power and Right of Almighty God as shown in the Predestination and Election of Some to Eternal Happiness and the Reprobation of Others to Everlasting Torment according to His own Foreknowledge and Determination, which may be called in Question of no Man.*

"Such," said Mr. Claggett, "are the Articles to which I refer. Such are the doctrines, the preaching of which by the minister for the time being forms one of the conditions under which this church

enjoys its Trust. And now I ask you—have those conditions been fulfilled any time during the last ten years? Nay, have they not been systematically evaded, violated, infringed? Has the present pastor ever preached any one of the doctrines here laid down? Has he not rather preached against them? Can he stand up in his place, here and now before us all, and swear that he believes in them? To ask the question is to answer it. I therefore put it to him and to you, as emphatically as I can speak: What moral or legal right has he to the stipend he has been receiving since he assumed the pastorate of this church, and what moral or legal right had you to pay it to him?"

It was a tremendous moment. No one answered, no one stirred; and then, every eye, which had been fixed upon the

threatening figure of the speaker, turned as by one consent upon the minister. Mr. Miller's face was pale, and stern, and set; there he sat, rigid and unflinching, as the lawyer hurled his defiances around, and the two deacons, flustered and taken aback, exchanged hurried whispers behind his chair. Suddenly the spell was broken.

"I rise to second the resolootion," exclaimed a wheezy treble from one of the back seats. Everybody started, and turned round to see this new enemy, who was speedily discovered in the person of a very old acquaintance indeed. The short, thickset body of Mr. Boyce was bent eagerly forward, and his small, narrow eyes gleamed with unveiled malignity as he felt that his hour had come at last. "I rise to second the resolootion," he repeated, his harsh, thin voice quivering with excitement.

"I can bear out everythink as 'as fallen from Mr. Claggett. I've pertested long enough against the 'eresies as we've had to listen to this many a year, and pertested in wain, as everybody 'ere knows well enough; 'tain't my fault, as I do witness agin you all this day: you've sown the wind, and now you're reapin' the whirlwind. What we wants is the old Gospel, to walk in the old paths, and 'ear the old truths; but i'stead o' that, we've 'ad teachin's as ain't no warrant in the Word o' God, and nothink but ridicule and contradiction when them as is taught in the Word——"

The conclusion of Mr. Boyce's speech was inaudible. It was drowned in a loud murmur from all sides, which rose higher and higher until the unfortunate tailor, seeing that his attempts to be heard were fruitless, sat down again. Then the tall

figure of Mr. Gervoise was seen, standing erect upon the daïs; and the congregation immediately relapsed into anxious and respectful silence.

"It would be useless for me," began the senior deacon, in an unsteady voice, "to try and minimize the importance of the very solemn charges brought against us, the officers of this church, by Mr. Claggett. They demand, on the contrary, the most serious and searching investigation. It is impossible to ignore the facts that the very existence of our community, in its present form, is threatened; that the characters of us, its officers, are impeached; and that a most cruel attack has been made upon our pastor personally. But I submit that the question is too difficult, too complicated, and has been sprung upon us too suddenly, for its proper discussion to be desirable, or even possible,

upon the present occasion; and I therefore propose, as an amendment, that this meeting do stand adjourned until to-day week, at the same time and place."

"I second that," exclaimed Mr. Searle, jumping up before his colleague had well resumed his seat. "But I don't intend that this meetin' shall separate without hearin' my opinion upon the outrageous speech we've been compelled to listen to from Mr. Claggett — a speech, I say, prompted by personal spite and ill-feeling simply because he hasn't been allowed his say in church matters that he wanted to interfere in. This is Mr. Claggett's revenge, that's what it is," said the deacon, with a certain wrathful jauntiness of tone. "He's angry 'cos he can't interfere as much as he'd like to, and so he goes and rummages up this old dockyment of two centuries ago, and tries and uses it as

a sort o' bogey, a sort o' scarecrow, to frighten us out of our wits with, in order 't he may carry out 'is own schemes. That's Mr. Claggett's idea of Christianity, that is; that's his idea of brotherly kindness and charity; and I'm sure we ought all to be very much obliged to him for such an example o' Christian love! Well, Sir, I'm not a-goin' to defend *you*, because you can very well defend yourself, and will, too, when the time comes; but this I will say: it never was any use tryin' to put new wine into old bottles, and there's no use in beginning now. I should like to see the man as would assail *my* orthodoxy; and yet I know well enough that science has advanced a considerable bit since Eusebius Appleyard lived, that our theories of interpretation have had to be very materially modified, and that we can't be bound, hard and fast, to what

Eusebius Appleyard thought fit to put into that there Trust-deed two 'underd years ago. Why, I've not the least doubt the man thought the world was flat; and small blame to him, says I. But is that any reason why we, as knows better, should pretend to believe it to-day? Are we to make ourselves a laughin'-stock to all creation by professin' doctrines only fit to be believed in the Dark Ages? *I* say *no*, and I say, too, that it's easy enough to see through Mr. Claggett's game. And I'll say one thing more before I sit down," exclaimed Mr. Searle in a loud, threatening tone, his sustained utterance now giving way to a final burst of anger. "If Mr. Claggett believes in the old burst-up notions of theology and science they taught in sixteen hundred and—and—something, he must be a very stupid man; and if he doesn't, he must be a very bad one!"

Then Mr. Searle, having relieved his mind, threw himself down in his chair again with a violent jerk, breathing through his nostrils defiantly. His spirited defence imparted a sense of comfort and encouragement to the audience, and his concluding thrust at their common foe was hailed as a very shrewd and happy epigram. A few smiles broke out here and there, and many of the ladies, in particular, began to look more cheerful, rather enjoying, than otherwise, the open tilt between the two men. The next moment, however, the passing relief was dispelled.

"I will not stop to pay the gentleman who spoke last all the compliments he deserves," said the clear, harsh voice of Mr. Claggett. "Such virtues as he has evinced are their own reward, and deserve no other. I only want to put him right

upon one point. Be the doctrines embodied in the schedule erroneous or not, they form part of the basis on which you enjoy this Trust; if they are not preached, you have no right to a single penny of the endowment; and you will find that from this obligation there is no release. I am a lawyer, and I tell you that no Vice-Chancellor in England will or can lift a finger to help you. Your only hope is in an Act of Parliament, and that you will certainly never get. There is your position in plain words; and I can only hope that by this day week you will have found some way out of the difficulty which I confess," concluded Mr. Claggett, smiling, "has not occurred to me."

Most faces were overcast again now, and for a few moments there was silence. Then, very slowly, Mr. Miller himself rose, and prepared to speak. He hesitated

for a second, and one or two of the women began to cry softly to themselves.

"I suppose," he said at last, his dark eyes looking darker and deeper than ever as he gazed earnestly upon his congregation,—"I suppose it is expected that I should say something to you, on this strange, unlooked-for incident, before we part. But it will be a few words only. The legal question that has been raised I will not touch upon. That is a matter for future consideration. The moral question, as it affects myself—well, *you* are all my judges. To your tribunal I appeal—to the men and the women who know me and trust me—who have known me and trusted me for ten years. And as to the doctrinal question—there I stand fast and firm. I have not scrupled to make known to you the whole counsel of God, as I believe it myself. I have

never preached what I don't believe myself, and please God I never will. I do not believe that the creation of the universe was begun on a Sunday morning and finished on the following Friday afternoon; I do not believe the Bible was mechanically written down at the dictation of the Holy Spirit; and I do not believe that God calls into being millions of innocent creatures who lie under sentence, at birth, of hideous and never-ending torture. The first two doctrines I regard as lunacy, the last as criminal lunacy. But enough. It only remains for me to put the amendment, proposed by Mr. Gervoise and seconded by Mr. Searle, that the present meeting be adjourned till this day week."

The amendment was put to the vote, and carried silently. Then came a difficult and painful moment. It was necessary

that the proceedings should be closed with prayer. The effort was a terrible one, but the minister braced himself for it, and in a firm, solemn voice pronounced the benediction. There were many sobs heard now, and they did not all come from where the women sat.

* * * * *

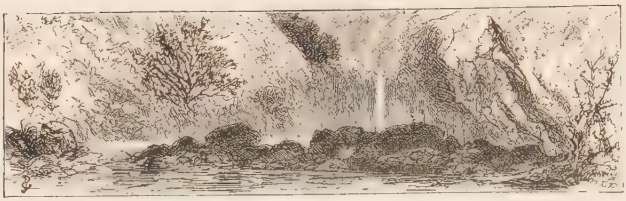
The week which followed was one of much anxiety and suspense. A full report of the proceedings appeared two days afterwards in the *Seaborough Critic and South-Coast Arbitrator*, and forthwith the whole affair was of course public property. The religious papers swooped like vultures on their prey. Mr. Gosling's favourite organ, the *Christian Spy*, came out with a scathing article headed "Wolves in the Sheepfold," in which Mr. Claggett was represented as a latter-day John Knox, Mr. Boyce as a type of persecuted Chris-

tian humility, and Mr. Miller as the insidious infidel, bent upon undermining evangelical religion while fraudulently enjoying revenues to which he had no right. The *Evangelical Agitator* took up very much the same strain, and the *Believer's Penny Whistle* uttered a shrill demand for the expulsion of both deacons and pastor from the Congregational body. The three gentlemen in question, however, did not read any of these articles, and were therefore not affected by them. They were, in fact, employing their time more practically in taking the very best legal advice upon their position; and in the course of the consultations Mr. Miller made a discovery which interested and startled him a good deal more than it should have done, considering his education and experience. He found, in short, that his so-called "free" church was not, and could never

be, free of State control; that, as an institution, it rested upon, and was amenable to, the law of England; and that the interest he had always felt in the Liberation movement in the Established Church was a little premature, if not misplaced, so long as the "free churches of Dissent" were themselves in bonds. This discovery, when its full bearing and import dawned upon him, occasioned a mental shock, and plunged him into much deep and serious thought. The delusion of a life-time was dispelled. Had it not been for his almost hereditary objection to the association of Church and State, he would in all probability have taken orders long before. Now he was brought suddenly face to face with the very power he had ignored, and found himself, a Nonconformist minister, just as answerable to it as if he had been a contumacious Ritualist.

These stubborn facts came home to him with resistless force, and, as he pondered them in the silence of his study, he suffered them to lead him to the only logical conclusion possible. He had no longer any *locus standi* as a Nonconformist.

But we must now hurry back for a few hours to St. Mary's, where the august festivities which conclude the summer term are on the point of commencing.



CHAPTER VI.

TWO BOLTS FROM THE BLUE.

THE sun shone brightly through the sultry air, and the streets of the old University city wore a half-serious, half-festive aspect, in harmony with the momentous pageantry which was to signalize the day. Elderly gentlemen in scarlet robes, middle-aged gentlemen in crimson hoods, and groups of ladies in light summer garb imparted an agreeable warmth of colouring to the gray old streets, while the pealing of a church bell here and there enhanced the prevailing sense of decorous jubilation. Already a considerable crowd was con-

verging towards the historic Theatre where the annual degrees were to be conferred. Handsomely-appointed carriages rolled through the narrow thoroughfares, filled for the most part with visitors more or less distinguished; occasionally the face of some man of eminence in literature, art, or statesmanship, the bearer of a name that was a household word all over Europe, would be recognised by the passers-by; until, at last, the colour gradually disappeared, the clocks tolled half-past ten, and there was nothing left in the streets but a few groups of stragglers in the blacks and grays of common life, as obscure in their reputations as their habiliments.

Guy, who was to go down on the following day, awoke about half-past eight, and for some time lay placidly in bed musing upon the future. He was to see Ianthe

for the last time that afternoon, at the Fête in the gardens of Evangelist's. There had, of course, been no appointment to that effect; but he knew that the Pottifers were going, and he trusted to his good fortune for an opportunity of exchanging a furtive word with her, or of taking, at any rate, a silent last farewell. There was no chance, now, of their meeting in the vacation. But afterwards? Would it be possible to resume their intercourse, in some measure, next term? Of course he intended to defy the Professor, and come up. Not to do so would be both ridiculous and contemptible, besides amounting to a cruel desertion of Ianthe. And she loved him so! She was so ready to run any risks for his sake! Her lot in life was so very, very hard! Desert her, now, in her extremity? Guy told himself that he would sooner perish.

Then he got out of bed, and performed a very careful toilet. Guy was just a little bit of a dandy in his way, and had a happy knack of always looking his best in whatever he happened to put on. Then he went into his study, where his breakfast things had been already laid, and poured out a cup of tea. As he did so, his eye fell upon a letter, which he had not immediately noticed. It was in the well-known handwriting of his father.

"That's curious," soliloquized Guy, as he munched his toast. "Why, I shall be home to-morrow. What can he have to say in such a hurry, I wonder? Perhaps he's going to be married, and wants to prepare me beforehand," he added with a humorous twinkle in his eye.

But Mr. Miller, as we know, was not going to be married. Guy broke the seal, raised his eyebrows for a moment at the

unusual length of the contents, and then began to read. We, who can easily guess what his letter was about, may be forgiven for looking over his shoulder.

"My dearest Guy,"—wrote Mr. Miller,

"Although we are to meet so soon, I feel compelled to lose no time in making you aware of a very strange and unexpected vicissitude which has overtaken me during the last few days, and which will materially, though I trust not altogether prejudicially, affect the future of us both. You know that I have never troubled you very much with our chapel politics, for I never had any desire that you should get mixed up with them. But an event has now occurred which it is necessary you should know without delay.

"I do not wish to enter upon all the

petty and miserable divisions that have been troubling us during the last few months. They are too trifling, too utterly mean and foolish, to be worth more than a passing sigh. But they have had a startling result. The faction opposed to me and to my ministry—a mere handful of not very influential persons, a dozen or fifteen at the outside—have impugned my right to the pastorate and stipend of Queen Street Chapel on the ground of a violation of the articles of the Trust-deed, a document dating as far back as 1662, or thereabouts. This document lays down certain theological dogmas, the promulgation of which from the pulpit constitutes one of the conditions of the Trust; and our opponents now allege, with perfect truth, that I have never preached the dogmas in question, and argue that I ought never to have been

minister of Queen Street Chapel at all. I may tell you, in passing, that these doctrines are such as no educated person at the present day believes ; that they belong to a theology long since exploded, a theology which seemed reasonable enough no doubt in the seventeenth century, before critical research was even dreamt of, but which is now fast becoming as extinct as the dodo. But that, it appears, does not affect the question. The conditions of the Trust-deed, I am advised, are as binding to-day as when they were first drawn up ; and if they had included, among the specified doctrines, the theory that the earth is flat, I should be compelled to preach the flatness of the earth, or not touch one farthing of the revenues.

"The position, you will see, is an extraordinary one. I was, of course, vaguely aware that the Trust-deed did contain

these clauses, and remember being somewhat amused, ten years ago, when I glanced hastily through the document. That it had any real grip upon me, individually, in the present year of grace, never seriously crossed my mind. I looked upon it as applicable simply and solely to the times when it was framed; and for this reason—that, were such doctrines to be preached now, the preacher would become a laughing-stock. It did not occur to me that a dead man could extend his influence over future generations, so as to bind them for ever to the semi-mediæval superstitions of his own day. But it now appears that such is indeed the case, and that neither the law, nor any other authority, is likely to grant us relief. Under these circumstances, I have no option but to resign my pastorate at once.

"That, however, is not all. I have learnt another lesson, of equal if not greater importance. I find that there are, virtually, no such institutions as the so-called 'free Churches' of Dissent. We are not independent of the law. We are not independent of our constitutions, which are supported and protected by the law. Full religious liberty is only possessed by the man who stands alone, unconnected officially with any religious body whatever; so that a Nonconformist minister, for example, has virtually no grounds for his Nonconformity if it only rests, as has hitherto been the case with me, upon an objection to State control. We are all—Churchmen and Dissenters alike—more or less regulated by the civil power.

"These considerations have led me to review my position, and I have talked the

matter over with Dean Sherborne. The Dean urges me strongly to take the only step consistent with the conclusions I have arrived at. You will guess, of course, what I mean. He is the Bishop-Designate of the diocese, and has promised me what preferment it may be in his power to bestow. I have not yet given him a reply, but I do feel very strongly that after my late experiences I am thoroughly out of harmony with the spirit and conceptions of Dissent, and should never feel at ease again in the Dissenting ministry.

"And now, my dear Guy, as regards yourself. Of course this change in my life will involve a change in yours. Temporarily, at any rate, I shall be much straitened for money, and it will be impossible for me to support you at St. Mary's any longer. This is a great disappoint-

ment to me, and I feel sure it will be a blow to you. I should have greatly liked you to take a good Honour degree. However, even here the excellent Dean has come to our assistance. He has promised to use his influence with the Secretary for Foreign Affairs to get you a nomination to the F. O., and the career, I think, will suit you. I am not quite penniless, and we shall be able to subsist somehow in the meantime.

"Do not mention the cause of your leaving the University to *anyone*. I have my reasons for this.

"Your affectionate father,

"ROBERT MILLER.

"*Seaborough*,
"*Tuesday*."

Certainly it was a blow. Guy sat, for a few moments, as though stunned. He felt scarcely sure that he was awake.

His father about to resign his pastorate—perhaps, even, to take orders in the Established Church! His own career at the University suddenly cut short, just when he was reading for his degree! It was incredible. And yet it was true—only too true—there was his father's letter, in plain black and white. Guy forgot everything else in the shock — even Ianthe. His life during the past few weeks seemed to him, for the moment, like a dream which was vanishing away. Yes, he was awake now, sure enough, and a very strange awakening he found it.

For a full half-hour he sat there, his breakfast untouched, plunged in a deep reverie. Then he got up, filled his pipe, and began to smoke, pacing the room meanwhile. His ideas soon became clearer, and he gradually found his excitement at the news becoming very strongly

tempered with disappointment of the keenest sort. At first he had been too much bewildered to know whether he was glad or sorry. Now, as he pondered over the position, he began to pity himself very deeply. Of course he was grieved at the troubles his father had undergone; but then, if he did follow the Dean's advice, and enter the Church, there would probably be a very prosperous future before him; while as for himself — his degree would have to be sacrificed, and half-a-dozen cherished plans given up. Do not, however, let us condemn him as selfish. He was by no means a selfish lad; but sudden changes, at his age, are apt to disconcert the best of us, and his youthful impatience at this upsetting of his happy college life must not be too severely censured.

Just then a sharp rap came at his door,

and in walked a youth of about his own age, who occupied rooms on the other side of the quad. Guy looked up irritably.

"Good-morning, Miller," said Danvers. "I'm going down this afternoon by the 4.5, so I thought I'd just look in to say ta-ta. Going to see the degrees given?"

"No—at least I hadn't thought of doing so," replied Guy, rather absently. "Are you?"

"Rather. There's sure to be some fun. And I wouldn't lose the chance of hearing Pinkerton recite his poem for anything. Let's go together, if you've nothing else to do."

"Thanks—I'm afraid I can't," said Guy. "I've—I've got to pack."

"Well, I must be off," said the other. "See you again next term, I suppose, if we don't meet before this afternoon."

"Indeed you won't!" blurted out Guy,

on the spur of the moment. "I'm not coming back next term."

"Not coming back!" exclaimed Danvers. "What, not at all? I'm awfully sorry to hear that. Why, that's something new, isn't it? You never told me that before."

"No, I didn't know it myself," said Guy, ruefully. "There, don't ask me about it, there's a good fellow. I can't enter into any whys and wherefores. I'm not coming, and there's nothing more to be said."

"Jove, I'm awfully sorry," replied Danvers. "However, I dare say we shall knock up against each other somehow. Where's Urquhart, by the way?"

"I suppose he's in his rooms," said Guy. "He's coming to lunch with me to-day. Will you come in too?"

"Thanks, I'm engaged," said Danvers.

"I'm lunching with the Pottifers. But I'll try and look round before I start, if I have time. By Jove, is that clock of yours right? I must bolt. Ta-ta, then, till this afternoon."

He was off in a twinkling. Guy heard his steps clattering down the stone staircase, and felt relieved to be once more alone. Then, suddenly, he bethought himself of Danvers's last remark. He was going to lunch with the Pottifers—and he would infallibly tell everybody, Ianthe included, that he, Guy Miller of Muriel, was not coming back next term!

Guy turned hot all over. To the majority of the guests the news would be of little or no interest, comparatively; but to Ianthe—and the Professor! And after all his vows and promises, his solemn assurances that he *would* return, in defiance of the Professor's threats, that they should

be calmly informed of his change of plan in his absence, yet on his own authority—it was maddening. The thing must be put a stop to. What would Ianthe think of him? And the Professor, how grimly would he triumph!

The lad was nearly beside himself. But there was just one chance. If he could only find Danvers, it would be easy to stop the news going any further. He glanced at the clock. It was just half-past ten. The proceedings at the Theatre would be soon in full swing, and Danvers was not likely to do much mischief meantime. It would be necessary, however, to make sure of him before the affair was over, and with this end in view Guy suppressed his excitement as best he could and betook himself once more to meditation.

Then he put together some of his things,

locked and strapped a couple of boxes, and began, slowly and sadly, to pack his books. This occupied him till a few minutes after twelve. By half-past he was in cap and gown, hastening through the streets upon his quest. As he entered the door leading to the Undergraduates' Gallery, a great hum or roar of voices met his ear, broken every now and then by a shout of laughter. Evidently the fun was at its highest. Guy rushed up the winding staircase, and for a moment looked down upon the strange scene below.

To the left sat the Vice-Chancellor in scarlet robes, surrounded by his court of dignitaries and the newly-made Doctors in Civil Law. The area was a dense mass of human beings, packed as tight as they could stand; the Ladies' Gallery was also pretty full; while in a pulpit immediately opposite the place where Guy found him-

self, stood Mr. Pinkerton, in regulation evening dress, reciting his prize poem. At first sight it seemed as if he were indulging in silent pantomime, and the effect was irresistibly funny. Mr. Pinkerton was short, and pale, and thin; his voice, too, was unfortunately weak; but he had spirit enough—or self-confidence enough—to feel the completest independence of these disadvantages. The subject of his poem was "Sun-Myths," and the poet's breast heaved with the proud consciousness that he had done full justice to his theme. What mattered the interruptions of the Philistine throng around him? If they would not listen, the day would surely come when the whole world would be his auditors. Just then a lull occurred, and Mr. Pinkerton's voice was heard declaiming, with rather a melancholy twang,

"Phœbus Apollo! Radiant God of Day,
Whose ruddy mares bound o'er their skyey way,
Onward advance! To thy refulgent orb
Beyond this lower gloom——"

"Cheer up, Sir; you'll be better to-morrow," cried a sympathizing voice from the gallery; and a roar of laughter drowned the next few lines. Then the poet was heard once more:

"And yet, O Sun,
Glowing to-day, yet wrapped in clouds anon,
What shall we say, when——"

"Don't say anything at all, Sir!" shouted another critic. "Save the remainder till next week!" vociferated someone else. "Don't look like that, Sir; we're not angry with you," exclaimed a third, soothingly. Mr. Pinkerton hesitated a moment, but soon recovered himself, and long before the din had ceased was already several lines further on than when he had been interrupted, though

not one word was audible. At last there was another pause. The action of the poem had apparently advanced several stages in the meantime.

> "Grant but a son to me, O King divine,
> And I will sacrifice him on thy shrine——"

"O *Sir!* O *Sir!*" came a torrent of indignant expostulations from the gallery. Guy, who had never seen anything of the sort before, found it impossible to help joining in the merriment; but the proceedings were drawing to a close, and it was absolutely necessary that he should lose no time in searching for Danvers. He threaded and elbowed his way as best he could through the crowd, glancing into every face he passed, and inquiring of anyone he came across who might possibly be able to assist him; but his quest was fruitless. He might as well have looked for the proverbial needle in a haystack.

Then, when the ceremonies were over, he tried to discover Danvers coming out; the crowd, however, was too great, and to his intense mortification he entirely failed to catch a glimpse of him. He waited till the Theatre was empty, and the audience had dispersed to the last man; then sorrowfully took his way back to his rooms, cursing his unlucky fate. There he found Cecil Urquhart awaiting him.

"Cecil," he exclaimed, "I never was better pleased to see you in my life than I am to-day."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Cecil, smiling. "What's up? Anything bothering you?"

"Yes," replied Guy, simply. "But come, let's have lunch. I'll tell you all about it—or as much as I can—while we're eating. I've just had a regular knock-down blow."

"That's bad," said Cecil. Just then the scout came in with some dishes, and hovered about for a few minutes, while Guy fumed. At last he disappeared, and the two sat down and began their meal.

"Now then," said Cecil. "What's the trouble?"

"Trouble the first," answered Guy—"I'm not coming up next term."

"Not coming up next term?" echoed the other, taken aback. "Why not?"

"Trouble the second," resumed Guy—"I mayn't tell you."

"Here be mysteries," observed Cecil. Then, suddenly, "Why, you never mean to tell me, Guy, that you funk old Pottifer? Of course you know what I think about all that business; but I can't bear the idea of your letting yourself be bullied in that way. You *must* come back, Guy, for the sake of your own honour, especially,

you know, after having told old Pottifer to go to the devil. You did tell him to go to the devil, you know, and in my opinion you were perfectly right," said the youth, with a judicial air; "and it would never do now to go back upon yourself, would it?"

"It's nothing to do with old Pottifer," burst out Guy, "and the third trouble is that everybody will say it has—just as you do now. But it hasn't. It's in consequence of a letter I had from home this morning—from my father—and for some reason or other he forbids me to say anything about the affair to anybody else. However, I may tell you this much, only don't let it go any further—he's going to give up his chapel at Seaborough, and, I believe, to chuck Dissent altogether. There, I don't suppose I ought to have told you even that much, but I feel I

must tell somebody the real reason of my leaving the 'Varsity, because I know it will be misrepresented."

"I see," said Cecil slowly. He was shrewd enough, now, to guess what was troubling Guy more than anything else. "Of course, it would be very mortifying if old Pottifer were to think he had really frightened you out of coming up again. And still more so, I suppose—from your point of view—if Mrs. Pottifer shared the same delusion."

"It's that that maddens me," exclaimed Guy. "And she knows of it already, I'm afraid. Like a fool, I went and blurted it out this morning to Danvers. He happened to come in just after I had read my father's letter, and when he said something about seeing me again next term I told him without a moment's thought that I shouldn't be here. Then,

just as he was going out at the door he remarked that he was lunching with the Pottifers. Of course he'll go and tell them. I've tried to find him, but couldn't. It is the most exasperating, the most infernal complication——"

"There, there, don't take on about it," said Cecil, smiling. "I dare say you'll have an opportunity of setting matters all right. Perhaps you'll see the lady herself at the Fête this afternoon; you're going, aren't you?"

"Yes, I'm going," answered Guy, more hopefully. "Well, I will certainly try and get a word with her—just to disabuse her mind of any erroneous impression, you know, that she may have received. But even when she knows as much as I am able to tell her, there's still the fact to be faced that I am never coming back. I'm afraid it'll cut her up most awfully."

"Unfortunate young woman," murmured Cecil, gravely. "I wonder you can sleep at night, Guy, I really do, when I think of all the havoc you've been creating in the breast of that innocent creature. She was quite happy with her earthquakes and her azimuths when you first met her; why couldn't you let her alone? Just think of her position to-day. And it's all your doing, you know—every bit of it. A regular case of Faust and Marguerite; only Faust has had a Mentor at his elbow instead of a Mephistophiles, which makes his conduct all the more seriously reprehensible."

It was very unkind of Cecil to plague Guy with this solemn chaff, for none knew better than he that it was Mrs. Pottifer who had pursued and vanquished Guy, while it was scarcely open to poor Guy to defend himself by urging this undoubted fact.

"However," continued Cecil, "you must do your best to comfort her this afternoon, if you get an opportunity. She'll need no end of comforting, you know. They always do. The trouble is that they're often so difficult to convince. Women, you know, Guy, are all that's enchanting when they get their own way, but when they're crossed it seems to vitiate their powers of reasoning to a most remarkable degree—and that's what makes them so dangerous to have anything to do with. Poor Mrs. Pottifer, now—what with her love and her disappointment, I shouldn't wonder a bit if you found her—well, what we should call unreasonable, if she weren't a woman. Of course it will be a blow to her, just as it is to you. So you'll have to be very patient, you know. Remember how happy she'd be now if you had never made all that desperate love to her—liber-

tine that you are—and if she does turn a trifle rusty——"

"Hold your tongue, Cecil, do," interrupted Guy, goaded almost to exasperation by the other's mockery. "It's all a joke to you, of course. I should like to know what isn't. Still, I do think you might find some rather more fitting subject for your jests than a woman's misery."

"Especially when you're the cause of it, eh?" retorted Cecil, his eye twinkling. "Ah, I don't wonder your conscience gnaws you a bit, Guy. I wouldn't have such a burden on *my* conscience, I know, for anything. Well, seeing that you probably won't meet each other very often in future, I can only trust that she'll soon recover the blow. Or at least, if not soon, then eventually — some day, you know. Or suppose you were to try and cure her of her infatuation at once! That really is

not a bad idea. You'll see her this afternoon ; well, make a sacrifice, do violence to your own feelings, and—quarrel with her. Say something disagreeable. Break the shock of the inevitable parting by trying to show her that you're not quite so enchanting a youth as she seems to consider you now. Cure her, Guy, cure her of this mad, fatal, hopeless passion which is preying on her vitals, and robbing her cheek of its vernal bloom. Tell her that her hair's out of curl, or that——"

"I'll not listen to another word," cried Guy, indignantly. "You may chaff and you may sneer — I sometimes think it's about all you *can* do—but you shan't turn that poor girl's anguish into ridicule. I'm not blaming you, Cecil—you don't understand the case, that's all. Come, let's talk of something else. There's a full hour yet before we need be stirring, and I want to

know what you're going to do with yourself during the vac."

The two were soon chatting peaceably together, smoking their pipes on either side of the window. Guy's rooms were on the second floor, and commanded a charming view of the old stone gables and immemorial elms of the adjoining college groves, now bathed in golden light. No wonder poor Guy was almost heartbroken at having to leave the University. Apart from recent experiences, he had led an idyllic life. The quiet hours of study, the half-monastic seclusion of the old college, the calm, sunny afternoons on the blue river or in the broad green meadows—all these had been very pleasant, very sweet to him. And now it had all to be given up. It was a bitter trial to the lad, and its bitterness was intensified by the sudden rupture that it involved with the

woman he imagined himself to love so fondly.

At half-past three they started, strolling leisurely through the hot streets. Guy's heart beat fast as they approached Evangelist's, and his cheek flushed and paled alternately. It had been arranged between them that when Guy caught sight of Mrs. Pottifer they should separate, in order that his movements should be free. The lawns were covered with groups of visitors, prominent among whom were the new Doctors in Civil Law, gorgeous in black velvet mediæval caps and flowing robes of scarlet and magenta; several handsome marquees had been erected, and a fine band was playing the March from *Scipio* as they entered. At first neither the Professor nor his wife was to be seen. The two lads walked slowly across the lawns, then down each gravel

path, and finally through the pavilions, glancing at every group they passed. Once they were accosted by a talkative friend, whom they had some difficulty in shaking off; and Miss Crewe bestowed an inviting smile upon them from, happily, a safe distance. It was not till they had been in the gardens about twenty minutes that they were successful in their search; and Cecil, with a sympathetic pinch of Guy's arm, left him to his fortune or his fate.

Never had Ianthe looked fairer or more radiant. She was sitting in the shade of a spreading cedar-tree, engaged in animated conversation with a young Fellow of Brecknock, whom Guy knew by sight only, and the ring of her clear laughter struck discordantly upon his ear. The last time he had seen her she had been pale and full of anguish. Now she looked

the picture of gaiety and life. The last words he had heard her utter were a wish that someone would put a bullet through her head. Now she was chatting and laughing like a woman who did not know what care meant. What could it all mean?

Perhaps she was still in ignorance —perhaps Danvers had never told her after all. Guy hesitated painfully for a few moments. Then he took a step or two in her direction; caught her eye, and wistfully raised his hat. She immediately turned again towards her companion, and resumed her conversation, laughingly. Guy might have been the completest stranger to her, for all the notice she took of his salute.

Incredible, but unmistakable. She had cut him dead.

Guy's breath came quick and short.

He felt that he could have cried out in his agony and amazement. Sadly he turned away, and then, from a short distance, stood watching them as they talked and laughed. The poor lad had never experienced misery half so acute as during those terrible ten minutes which followed. They seemed to him like ten hours. Luckily the place where he was standing was tolerably quiet, and no one passed that way. He could not have borne being spoken to. Meanwhile the band played gaily on, and the sun shone cheerily over the beautiful garden and the light-hearted, smartly-dressed people in it; but Guy heard nothing, saw nothing—nothing but the woman he would have died for flirting with another man—knew nothing, save that she, who had sworn to love him until death, had just turned her back upon him.

Suddenly he saw the Brecknock man get up and prepare to leave her. Yes—there was no doubt about it. He raised his hat as he turned away—clear proof that he was not coming back. The next moment she was alone. With a great sigh of satisfaction Guy strode forward and took the vacant seat. His heart beat wildly, and the appearance of the Professor himself would not have caused him to flinch one instant in the prosecution of his purpose. He was too desperately in earnest to stand upon trifles now.

"Ianthe," he said, breathlessly, "why did you cut me when I bowed to you just now?"

Mrs. Pottifer raised her eyebrows innocently. "Cut you, Mr. Miller?" she said, with a conventional smile. "I hope you don't think I intended to cut you. I was talking to Mr. Collins, I

suppose. Do you know him? He is one of the Fellows of Brecknock."

"Bother Mr. Collins!" cried Guy. "Ianthe, why are you so changed? What do you mean by calling me Mr. Miller? I feel half distracted at it all. And I've been dying to speak to you all day. Do you know—have you heard—that I shan't be able to come up next term after all?"

"Oh, yes," replied Mrs. Pottifer. "We heard of it at lunch to-day from Mr. Danvers."

"Ah!" groaned Guy, wretchedly. "And what must you think of me? Oh, it's too hard to be borne. Of course you don't know the reason. Do you despise me very, very much?"

"Despise you!" repeated Ianthe, with well-acted surprise. "What right have I to despise you? No doubt you know your own business best. I have no right

to express an opinion. In fact, most people would say you were very wise to adopt the advice that was given to you, you know."

"But that has nothing to do with it!' cried Guy, in his exasperation. "You know perfectly well I swore that that should never influence me. It is something else that has arisen—something I am bound in honour not to reveal, and which leaves me no option whatever."

"Really," observed Ianthe, with enraging calmness. "Oh, I have no doubt your motives are cogent enough. Every man has a right to change his mind. You were too hasty, you see, in asserting your intention to return when my husband warned you not to. Never be too hasty, Mr. Miller. Over-haste is too often followed by a change of mind, and then you know one is forced to break one's

word, which is always a rather humiliating thing to do."

"I think you are trying to drive me mad!" exclaimed Guy, indignantly. "What has come over you? What have I done that you should treat me in this barbarous way? Are you the same woman who vowed not a week ago that she would love me for ever, whatever happened? It is all terrible to me—terrible. It's like a nightmare. I tell you again, that in this matter of giving up the 'Varsity I have no choice. If you knew the reason of it you would think so too. Why can't you take my word for it? Have you so little trust in me as all that?"

"It seems to me that you are exciting yourself very unnecessarily, Mr. Miller," replied Ianthe, coldly. "Have I accused you? Have I asked you for any explana-

tion? Have I put you on your defence? To what end are you making all these asseverations so earnestly?"

Guy took a deep breath before he answered. Then, white to the very lips, he said:

"You are revenging yourself upon me ungenerously and cruelly. Unless, indeed, some other soul has got into your body, and your identity has changed, since last Wednesday. Have you no heart, no memory? Do you indeed care for me no longer—or have you forgotten that you ever did care for me at all? You tempt me to be as ungenerous as yourself—to repeat in your ears the words of love and faithfulness that your own lips pronounced to me a week ago. Once you would have welcomed them, and said them again and again. Have you shut your memory to everything? Do you forget

that over and over again we have exchanged vows of eternal love, of unalterable fidelity to each other? O Ianthe, could I ever have found it in my heart to treat you as you are treating me—no, no, it is impossible. I have loved you and still love you too much to cause you one instant's pain. Why have you broken faith with me?"

"I am not aware of having misled you in any way, Mr. Miller," said Ianthe, in frigid tones. "As to the past, it is perhaps not altogether desirable that we should dwell upon it. Surely no gentleman persists in alluding to a subject which he sees is distasteful to a lady. And I am sorry that you compel me to remind you that I am a married woman. As you say, you are not returning after the Long Vacation, so it is scarcely likely that we shall meet again; but I may

assure you that the Professor and myself will always be glad to hear that you are doing well."

The woman's eyes looked as hard as stone as she uttered these atrocious sentences. For a moment or two Guy felt as though turned into stone himself; the cruelty was so cynical, the repudiation of the past so impudent, the whole exhibition of apostasy so gross, that for the second time that day he doubted whether he was awake. Yet there she sat, calm, smiling, and relentless; the sun was shining as brightly as ever, the gaily dressed company were sauntering here and there, and the music of the band was heard, in cheerful mockery of his wretchedness, from one of the pavilions. Then she found that she had gone too far. Guy refused to humble himself afresh.

"I will not intrude upon you longer, Mrs. Pottifer," he said, rising. "I once loved you—but that was when my knowledge of you was superficial. I know you better now, and I neither love nor hate you. You are scarcely worth contempt."

He bowed slightly, and strode from her with a firm, proud step. A faint sound, like a quick catching of breath, reached him at the same moment; but he neither stopped nor turned. He soon found Cecil, who had just left a party of ladies, and, seeing Guy approach, hastened to meet him.

"Let us come home, Cecil," said Guy, passing his hand through his friend's arm. "The world has come to an end for me to-day."

"What do you mean?" asked Cecil, with real concern.

"Only that you have been right throughout," returned Guy. "Every word you ever said to me about that woman was true. From this day I wipe her out of my memory. And now let's change the subject."

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEAD MAN'S GRIP.

Mr. Claggett's triumph was completer than he had ever hoped for or imagined. Not knowing the man he had to deal with, he had looked forward to a fierce fight, a desperate struggle, in which he, single-handed, should enjoy the exquisite delight of watching the gradual collapse of all his foes, and smiling to himself at their futile though united resistance to his assault. He had expected, at any rate, a show of defiance, if not an attempt at reprisals; and keen had been his pleasure in the anticipation. The surrender of

the enemy, therefore, was an almost disconcerting surprise, and came upon him like something of a disappointment. As we know, Mr. Miller took the only common-sense and honourable course. Disdaining a public squabble with an antagonist of Mr. Claggett's quality, he quietly took the best legal advice upon the point at issue; and, finding the facts against him, left his foe in possession of the field. The whole affair had come upon him with bewildering suddenness. He was unprepared for it, and there is no doubt that at first the blow was a severe one. When he recovered his breath, however, he found that he was not very much hurt after all; and by the time he had got accustomed to his new position, he experienced a certain feeling of relief.

Not so, however, his supporters. They,

it is not too much to say, were almost beside themselves with consternation. Mrs. Searle even went so far as to vow she would wash her hands of Mr. Miller altogether; forgetting, in the heat of her first indignation, that that was precisely what Mr. Miller had done as regarded herself. Miss Dabbs wept copiously; far was it from her to censure the ex-minister for his desertion; on the contrary, she defended him against the deacon's wife, and vowed, on her side, that she would follow him into the wilderness. There were, indeed, but few dry eyes in Queen Street Chapel on the Sunday night when Mr. Miller preached his farewell sermon. Even Mr. Searle was heard to blow his nose more sonorously than usual, and Mr. Gervoise looked grave, and pale, and agitated. The rank and file, it must be admitted, took the

same view of the case as Mrs. Searle. To them it appeared that the minister had betrayed his trust, and was leaving them defenceless, as sheep having no shepherd. For some days, Mr. Miller was unpopular among his own friends. As Mr. Searle put it, in a somewhat confused metaphor, he was like a skipper who had thrown his own ship overboard, abandoning the crew to the mercy of the winds and waves. But these harsh judgments were visibly tempered later on, when the retiring pastor took formal leave of his flock. He put the case to them very quietly, very clearly. He confessed his own fault in having accepted the position he now resigned without due regard to the conditions of its tenure. To continue it was no longer possible, as they themselves must see. And, in bidding them farewell and God-speed, it

was with a full consciousness that, in spite of many shortcomings, he had striven to declare unto them the whole counsel of God to the best of his own understanding, and had never preached a doctrine or uttered a word from that pulpit which he did not believe himself.

The final hymn was sung, the benediction pronounced, and the Rev. Robert Miller descended the pulpit stairs for the last time. Queen Street Chapel had now no minister, and unless the doors were to be closed altogether it behoved the deacons to lose no time in providing for the future conduct of the services. On the Monday following they met privately to consult what should be done, and, in pursuance of their deliberations, issued invitations through the recognised channels to certain pastors on the look-out for flocks to come and preach trial-sermons

on six successive Sundays, beginning with the next. There was no difficulty so far. The six ministers came in their due order, preached their sermons, received their guineas, and were much criticised and canvassed by their judges. Not one, however, gave such general satisfaction as to warrant his receiving a "call," and there was nothing for it but to invite another batch. Out of the second six there were two who, by general consent, were the most promising candidates. One was a gentleman from India, whose originalities of appearance and delivery arrested the attention of his hearers. The Rev. Alfred Whitaker presented himself to the congregation in a black tie and pepper-and-salt trousers, thereby administering a certain shock to eyes accustomed to the ultra clerical get-up of the late minister. He gave out his text, in a racy American

twang, from a portion of the Scriptures which he called, in a defiant tone, "Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians," and his sermon abounded in shrewd, pithy epigrams and humorous anecdotes which now startled, now convulsed, his auditors. In the evening he electrified everybody by preaching from a paragraph in the last number of *Truth*, a publication not very widely known among the members of Queen Street Chapel, old Mrs. Trinder afterwards remarking that so evidently pious and evangelical a magazine deserved more support than she feared it had hitherto received. Mr. Gervoise, who knew better, was sadly scandalized at the whole affair, but Mr. Searle rather enjoyed it, and a lively controversy took place between the deacons as to whether it was advisable to recommend Mr. Whitaker to the suffrages of the congregation. It

was undeniable that he was the cleverest preacher they had had since Mr. Miller left, and his two sermons had made a certain sensation in the town. If he were elected, there was little doubt that he would draw, and continue to fill the coffers; at any rate, there could be no harm in giving him a chance of acceptance. But Mr. Gervoise was inflexible. Nothing, he said, would ever induce him to countenance for a single moment so dangerously unconventional a person, and if by any hazard there appeared a predominant feeling in his favour, he would have no option but to resign his diaconate altogether. Thereupon Mr. Searle gave way, and the Rev. Alfred Whitaker was no more heard of, though there can be no doubt that, had the church been polled, a fairly large number of votes would have been registered in his favour. The other

candidate was a gentleman of the name of Spoonbill—the Rev. Jeremiah Spoonbill, B.A., from Herefordshire. He was a rather tearfully-disposed man, much given to punctuating his discourses with deep-drawn sighs and little plaintive moans; and his trial-sermons had a very moving effect upon the congregation. A tall, sallow, long-visaged person, his appearance was generally voted "most interesting;" his deep-set eyes gleamed with a sort of mournful pathos, and his voice quivered with a most impressive melancholy. He took for his text, "Rejoice in the Lord alway; again I say, Rejoice," —and, himself the very picture of despair, urged in a dolorous whine the duty of always rejoicing. "However sad one's heart may be; however keen the wail of agony that goes up from this distressful earth; in spite of the sickness,

the disasters, and the deaths, the memory of bereavements past and the prospect of miseries yet in store, O my dear brethren, let us never—never"—a large tear falling on his manuscript the while—"forget that it is our bounden *duty* to rejoice." Whereupon one or two of the ladies began to weep in sympathy, and whispered to each other afterwards that he really was the very *dearest* man; though a few others, of less emotional dispositions, wondered what he had to cry about, and Mrs. Searle sniffed so loudly in her scorn as to bring upon herself a smart jog from her husband's elbow, under the impression that she was crying too. Mr. Searle, in his coarse way, remarked to his fellow deacon after service was over that the man was no better than a pump, and that he, for one, had no desire to sit and be pumped upon every Sunday of his life.

To this, however, Mr. Gervoise replied, with a very frigid stare, that, in his opinion, the Rev. Mr. Spoonbill was not only a man of great natural gifts, but of extraordinary spiritual insight; and that, for his part, he had rarely listened to anyone who had interested and impressed him more profoundly. Of course, another discussion resulted from these divergent views, terminating, as the former had done, in a compromise; and the Rev. Mr. Spoonbill's nomination dropped in consequence.

Matters now began to look serious. Twelve probationers had come and preached at Queen Street Chapel, of whom ten were palpably unsuitable; the remaining two had each his partizans, but neither a decisive majority, while the election of either would risk a disagreeable schism. Just at that very juncture,

however, when the difficulty looked most formidable, a letter reached Mr. Gervoise which afforded both deacons the greatest possible relief and satisfaction. An eminent—a very eminent—minister from one of the midland counties had been ordered by his medical adviser to remove, as soon as possible, to the seaside. Sea air, in fact, was imperatively necessary for him; so necessary, indeed, that in any case he would be forced to resign his present charge, as his health would no longer stand the atmosphere of an inland manufacturing town; and he therefore offered himself as a candidate for the vacant pastorate of the Seaborough Congregational Chapel.

The news soon spread, and the advent of Dr. Fleming, late of Stockhampton, was eagerly looked forward to. Ostensibly, of course, he was only coming

to preach his trial sermon, like his predecessors; but it was understood that his election was a pure matter of form. Indeed, it would have savoured of presumption had the Seaborough congregation proposed to sit in judgment on his gifts, for the doctor was a man of great reputation, and any church might consider itself extremely lucky and very highly honoured in securing him for its pastor. The deadlock, then, was at an end, and everybody breathed more freely. Dear Mr. Miller's resignation was, of course, an irreparable loss; but now all things had worked together for good, and they had deep cause for thankfulness to Providence, who had brought them out into such a wealthy place.

Very soon Dr. Fleming himself appeared, and preached twice, to large and excited congregations. There was no

doubt of his power. He was evidently a man of great learning, much eloquence, and singular personal charm. He was also a very handsome man, in spite of his sixty years, and he had a fine melodious voice, which he knew how to use very skilfully. In short, he created a most favourable impression, and if there were any dissentient voices they were not loud enough to be heard. It was noticed, however, that Mr. Claggett expressed no opinion. Nor had he, indeed, appeared to take any interest in any of the probationers, from the very first. He listened attentively, but said nothing, even when there seemed some chance of a selection being made. And now he maintained the same show of indifference that had characterized him all along.

Then the two deacons waited on Dr. Fleming, and asked him whether, on a

formal "call" being made, he would accept the pastorate of the church. Dr. Fleming replied that he would do so, supposing the call to be practically unanimous, and supposing, further, that no unforeseen obstacles came in his way.

"There needn't be any doubt as to the first proviso," said Mr. Searle, in an off-hand style. "And as to any unforeseen obstacles—why, if they're unforeseen of course we can't foresee 'em," he concluded, with a chuckle at what he considered the shrewdness of his own remark.

"It would be well that Dr. Fleming should see the Trust-deed, however," put in Mr. Gervoise, glancing at his fellow-deacon.

"Beyond question," remarked the doctor. "That is a most important point, especially as, from what is reported, it was an inability to comply with the provisions

of that document that led to the resignation of your late pastor. Perhaps you would be good enough to inform me what his difficulties actually were."

"The fact is, my dear Sir," replied Mr. Searle, "that our late excellent minister was what I may call just a wee bit over-squeamish. This Trust-deed, as there's been so much fuss about, was drawn up two 'underd years ago, or thereabouts, and the wording of it reads a little out o' date, don't you see, in the nineteenth century. One has to interpret it in the light of the times when it was written, and make proper allowances. There are some things in it that I should wish were differently worded; I should have worded 'em differently myself, in fact; still, there they are, and we've got to make the best of 'em. Well, now, Sir, it's all a question of interpretation.

You *can* interpret 'em as Mr. Miller did —make nonsense of 'em, in fact,—and then of course they can't be got over; or you *can* interpret 'em by allowing for the ignorance of the age when they were framed, and then there need be no difficulty whatever. However, you can see for yourself. Here's a copy o' the Articles I've brought with me, so as we can talk the matter over freely. There's the ones Mr. Miller jibbed at—Nos. 4, 5, and 8."

"Ah," said Dr. Fleming assentingly, as he took the paper. "An archaic or obsolete style is very often a barrier to clearness of understanding. Let me see, now." Here he settled his gold-rimmed spectacles on his nose, spread the document out before him, and began to read it slowly and attentively, the two deacons watching him closely the while. Article 4 seemed to worry him more than he

had expected. He frowned, screwed up his mouth, and shook his head; then went on to the next, which he read twice through in an undertone; and finally settled upon No. 8. Fully five minutes elapsed before he spoke again; and, when he did, he disconcerted the two deacons beyond measure.

"It is impossible for me to undertake the pastorate of your church, gentlemen," he said, briefly.

"You consider that the provisions of the Trust-deed do not lend themselves to an interpretation"—began Mr. Gervoise, hesitatingly.

"My dear Sir, there is no question of interpretation," replied Dr. Fleming, with decision. "The wording of these three Articles is as plain as A B C, and can only be accepted as it stands. I do not wonder that your late minister found him-

self constrained to resign. I am only surprised that he could ever have assumed his pastorate at all, under such conditions."

The deacons looked terribly blank at this Here was a deadlock indeed. Mr. Gervoise glanced helplessly at Mr. Searle, and Mr. Searle glanced despairingly at Mr. Gervoise; but neither had a word to say.

"I am sorry," continued Dr. Fleming, "more sorry than I can tell you; if you are disappointed, let me assure you that I am disappointed too. I confess frankly that I should have liked to become your pastor. The air of Seaborough suits me, and the place itself constitutes an excellent field of labour. But I am afraid that the plan must now be given up."

"But is there no way out of the difficulty?" exclaimed Mr. Searle, in despera-

tion. "At this rate we shall never get another minister at all, it seems to me. Can't you suggest anything, Sir, to help us over the stile?"

"There are only two courses before you," replied Dr. Fleming. "One is, to appoint as your minister some man who can accept these clauses in all their full verbal and literal significance. That there are many such I do not for an instant doubt; but whether any of them would give you satisfaction is another matter. Hyper-Calvinists do still exist, and so do persons who have no more knowledge of recent scientific discoveries and critical research than children of a month old. But would such a man be acceptable to you? I should imagine not. Then your only other way would be to apply to Chancery for such relief as the case requires. Of course that would

involve much time and expense, and the issue after all would be doubtful—very doubtful. In fact, the position is altogether most unsatisfactory, and I am sincerely sorry, both for your sakes and for my own. Have you consulted a Chancery lawyer upon the point?"

"Mr. Miller took the opinion of one of the most eminent, I believe," said Mr. Gervoise; "and I am bound to say that it afforded us no encouragement. Of that his own resignation was a sufficiently clear proof."

"Just so," assented Dr. Fleming. "Then I am afraid there is no more to be said. It might, of course, be well for you to lay the exact state of the case before the church-members, and ask their opinion as to the desirability of submitting it to a Vice-Chancellor; for there can be no doubt that as time goes on you will

find it increasingly difficult to comply with the provisions of the Trust-deed, and then you, or your successors, will be in a worse fix than you are now. Could those three Articles be removed or modified, I would accept your pastorate the next day. But in any case I should think you might lighten your own responsibilities by taking the church-members into your confidence, and abiding by their decision."

"I can only say, Sir, that we are very deeply grateful to you for your good will and excellent advice," said Mr. Gervoise, as he rose slowly from his seat.

"And we'll act upon it, that's more," said Mr. Searle, recovering something of his natural briskness. "I begin to feel like fighting. I ain't goin' to give in without a tussle. Good-bye, Sir, good-bye; and let's hope we shall have some better

news for you next time we come to call."

But Mr. Searle's hopes were doomed to be disappointed. The deacons followed Dr. Fleming's counsel, and laid the whole matter fully and clearly before the church; Mr. Searle arguing hotly in favour of appealing to a Court of Chancery, or even to Parliament itself, while Mr. Gervoise, graver and cooler-headed, drew the attention of the meeting to the heavy expenses that would thereby be incurred, and the extreme uncertainty of the result. He did not, he said, wish in any way to discourage the attempt, or to throw cold-water on the enthusiasm of Mr. Searle, with whom he sympathized most deeply; still, they would do well to remember that the opinion of certain very leading counsel was against them, and that Vice-Chancellor Hall had decided an almost exactly similar

case in a manner adverse to their present claims. That constituted a most important precedent, and one which it would be unwise to ignore in coming to a decision upon the very difficult and momentous subject before them.

The upshot was that Mr. Searle was beaten. It was generally held that discretion was the better part of valour, and Mr. Searle's motion was lost by a large majority. There remained nothing for it but to find a minister who would swallow the clauses whole.

This was Mr. Claggett's opportunity. He had been hoping that the deacons would resign, and so leave him an entirely free hand; but as they did not, at so grave a crisis, desert their posts, he was forced to make the best of the situation, and strike at once. He accordingly came forward, and offered, with the church's

sanction, to produce a candidate to whom the clauses would present no obstacle whatever. The deacons, harassed and discouraged, made no objection, and on the following Sunday the pulpit was occupied by a rather common-looking, pedantic young man, whose style of oratory and pronunciation of the Queen's English formed a marked contrast to that of his immediate predecessor. It was no other, in fact, than Mr. Claggett's nephew, the Rev. Andrew Gosling, whose acquaintance we made in Mrs. Searle's drawing-room a short time ago; and appearances were certainly in favour of his being chosen the new pastor of Queen Street Congregational Chapel at no very distant date.

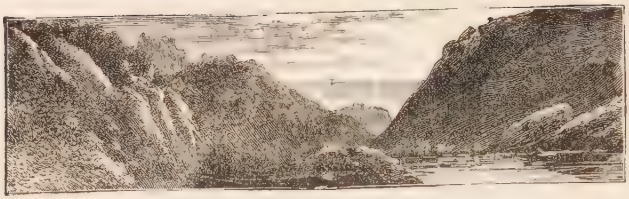
The fact was that there was no one else. Mr. Gosling avowed himself a staunch believer in the three Articles, and was willing to preach them every

Sunday if required; and the congregation, tired out with the lengthy interregnum, and the utter hopelessness of their position, finished by electing him for the period of one year. But matters did not stop there. Mr. Gosling's flush of triumph had scarcely died away before he found that it was one thing to preach, and another thing to have a congregation. This was apparently the view of many even who had voted for him; he may preach what he likes, they said to themselves, but it does not follow that we are obliged to hear him. No sooner was the young man formally accepted, than Mr. Gervoise and Mr. Searle resigned, not only their offices, but their membership as well; and they were followed by some fifty or sixty others, while Miss Dabbs "went over" to the Church. These good people argued, and with much

force, that the provisions of the Trust-deed had just as much hold over them as members of the chapel as over the minister; and that if the minister had had no option but to give up his office, it followed that they ought to resign too. And thus it was that an esteemed and honoured pastor was compelled to part company from the congregation who had chosen him and wished to retain him; that the congregation, so bereft, were unable to appoint the successor they desired and who on his side was desirous to come; and that the only conditions upon which they could get a minister at all were that he should preach in their unwilling ears doctrines which they did not believe. The hand of the dead man had been held over them all these years, and now they felt its grip.

The Opposition now came into power.

Mr. Claggett was appointed senior deacon, and Mr. Boyce was made happy by being permitted, Sunday after Sunday, to give out the hymns.



CHAPTER VIII.

RETRIBUTION.

It was a good thing for Guy, after the extraordinary change in Ianthe's conduct towards him, that his departure from St. Mary's took place next day. His whole soul was in a turmoil. It was not only that her insulting cruelty and faithlessness cut him to the very heart; a severe shock had been administered to his *amour propre*, and he writhed when he remembered how he had expatiated to Cecil Urquhart upon the desolation and anguish that would fall upon the woman who loved him when she knew he would return no more. Yet,

as we know, he was fully justified in his belief. It was Ianthe who had changed — suddenly, unaccountably, mysteriously changed—and, sharp as were the pangs she had inflicted on him, he was sufficiently master of himself to feel that, in the face of the treatment he had received, it would be inconsistent with his self-respect to lapse into melancholy and despair.

Mr. Miller, from whom Guy had carefully concealed his folly, was more than usually glad to see his son again. Under the new, strange conditions into which his life had passed, he felt the need of a friend, a confidant, to whom he could talk freely and unreservedly, and such a friend he now found in Guy. He had never before taken him very deeply into his confidence ; on the contrary, it had been his aim rather to dissociate the lad from

the petty politics in which he was himself always more or less involved, leaving him to the wider, freer, and healthier associations of a University career. But this Claggett affair had brought them nearer together; the chapel was over and done with, and it was only natural that the new life opening to both father and son should rouse a new, keen interest in the lad's breast. Under the circumstances, nothing better could have happened to him, and he soon found himself getting happier and more cheerful every day.

Shortly after his resignation of the pastorate, Mr. Miller left Seaborough for good, and took up his abode at Churchminster, the Cathedral city of his staunch friend the Dean. That genial dignitary had, meanwhile, been offered, and had accepted, the Bishopric of the diocese, and Mr. Miller, who by this time had

definitely made up his mind to take orders in the Church, promised himself the pleasure of receiving ordination at his hands. It is unnecessary to say that the minister's secession was very much spoken of and canvassed, particularly among the members of his former congregation at Seaborough. By some it was severely and unequivocally condemned. There were even one or two who spoke of him as a renegade, though whether they would have applied that term to an Anglican clergyman who had become a member of their own sect is perhaps an open question. Others, in yet more scornful vein, said that the Church was quite welcome to their leavings; forgetful, however, that it was not they who had left Mr. Miller, but Mr. Miller who had left them. A few wondered how he would manage to swallow all the Church's teach-

ings — for, certainly, there was at least one Article in the Thirty-nine calculated to prove as difficult a pill as any of Master Appleyard's; but they were reminded that in the Church of England it was not necessary to 'believe' everything so long as you were willing to 'assent' to it. These cavillers were, however, in the minority. The bulk of the minister's people—those who had remained faithful to him throughout—deplored his departure from Seaborough, as well as his secession from Dissent, as a very serious loss; and if none of them emulated the devotion of Miss Dabbs in following him "into the wilderness," and joining themselves to an Erastian Church, they yet respected the purity of his motives, and thought deferentially and kindly of him.

In course of time, then, Mr. Miller was duly ordained by Bishop Sherborne, and,

after serving his diaconate, was appointed to a church not far from London, where he speedily made his mark as a powerful and original preacher. There he developed into a moderate High Churchman, with advanced views tending towards doctrinal breadth; a variety of ecclesiastic rare enough at one time, but now constituting a somewhat influential school. Its main characteristic is the sacerdotal instinct tempered by a judicious rationalism, and it numbers among its adherents some of the subtlest intellects in the Church of England.

* * * * *

We now propose to take advantage of one of the many privileges of the story-teller, and ask the reader to skip over with us a period of three years. Our curtain rises for the last time, and discloses the enchanting scenery of the

English Lakes. It is difficult to avoid dwelling for a page or two upon the beauties of this classic land, which is itself the key to all that savours of individuality in Wordsworth's poetry. Even the man who has never been able to appreciate Wordsworth is enabled to understand what inspired his muse, as he stands on one of the grassy knolls of Windermere, with the sheep-bells tinkling round him, the soft, blue-gray sky above, and the smooth lake lying at his feet. There is nothing grandly picturesque. Not Byron himself could have written 'Cain' or 'Manfred' in the neighbourhood of Grasmere or Bowness. But it is beautiful with the beauty of perfect calm, and the unconscious loveliness of Arcadia. It puts no strain upon one's sensibilities, but rather soothes them, with the sedative of a satisfaction simple and complete. Excessive

admiration is, after all, rather a fatiguing emotion; enjoyment never, and this is an enjoyment born of restfulness. Nor does the quiet grace of the Lake district ever lapse into monotony. From Windermere to Rydal Mount the change is subtle but continuous. The fairy woodland glades round Catbells form a harmonious contrast to the bolder precincts of the Langdale Pikes. Each lake with its circumjacent hills differs from its neighbours in glory, lovely with a lustre of its own, while the modulations of light and shade and colouring are perpetual.

> 'Soft as a cloud is yon blue ridge—the mere
> Seems firm as solid crystal, breathless, clear,
> And motionless; and, to the gazer's eye,
> Deeper than ocean in th' immensity
> Of its vague mountains and its unreal sky.'

It was on just such a morning as that on which Wordsworth must have penned

those lines that a young gentleman, whose appearance is not altogether strange to us, was pacing slowly up and down the broad, smooth lawn of the Ulleswater Hotel, smoking his matutinal cigar. A soft gray felt hat was tipped over his forehead, and ever and anon he raised his eyes towards a certain window on the first floor, behind which a somewhat indistinct figure might be descried ever and anon moving briskly to and fro. It bade fair to be an exquisite day, and this young man, in his light tourist suit, appeared in full harmony with his surroundings — bright, sunny, and serene. The clear lake, flecked with blue lights, lapped lazily against the shore, and ever and anon a boat would pass by, swiftly and silently, over its tinted surface. Another boat, drawn up at a little landing-stage, was awaiting occupants; and

to this our friend cast an occasional glance, as though to assure himself that he had made a wise selection. The air, stirred by the gentlest breeze, was dazzling in its transparency, and exhilarating as champagne. It was one of those rare days on which existence itself is luxury.

As he approached the end of the lawn he paused, and, shading his eyes under his broad felt, gazed for a few moments at a bird which, whirling round and round in wide circles, was gradually nearing the water. Suddenly it made a dart at something, and then rose straight into the air and flew away. The whole incident did not last fifty seconds, but by engaging the young man's attention for that time it afforded an opportunity for another person to appear upon the scene, and come up to where he was standing, unheard. Turning round to resume his walk

he found himself face-to-face with the newcomer. Each uttered the other's name simultaneously.

"Guy!"

"Mrs. Pottifer!"

A pause. Guy looked startled and astonished. For a brief space he could scarcely collect his thoughts, and hesitated. Ianthe was perfectly self-possessed, but appeared pale and thin, with a somewhat plaintive smile; she was dressed, too, he noticed, in deep mourning. It was she who broke the silence.

"You are surprised to see me?" she asked, softly.

"I was never more taken aback in my life!" exclaimed Guy. "I had no idea you were in the neighbourhood. Are you making any stay?"

"No—I am only passing through," said Ianthe, with a half-sigh.

They walked on a little, slowly.

"Indeed," said Guy, recovering himself. "Well, you are fortunate in your weather. I suppose you are touring all through the district. What part strikes you as the prettiest?"

Ianthe darted a look of keen reproach and disappointment at him; but Guy paid no attention to it.

"I am no great judge of scenery," she said, in stifled tones.

"No?" answered Guy, interrogatively. "Well, no more was I till I came here; but now I am becoming quite a connoisseur. There are some bits hereabouts which are wonderfully fine. Do you know that great ring of stones near Keswick, rather like a miniature Stonehenge? You are surrounded there by an amphitheatre of mountains without a break, and the effect is most weird. You can scarcely

believe in yourself; the nineteenth century seems like a dream, and you are away back in the times of the Druids, when I suppose Helvellyn looked very much as it looks to-day. You should certainly go and see that. Then there's Grasmere, you know, near Ambleside. I think I like that little place as well as any. I forget whether you sketch?"

Ianthe bent her head low, and made no answer.

"You seem tired," said Guy, after a moment. "Would you like to sit down?"

"Oh, you are cruel, cruel!" Ianthe burst out. "I deserve it, I know. I deserve it all. But, O Guy, why are you so merciless to me? Am I never to be forgiven?"

"Forgiven," repeated Guy, thoughtfully. "To be quite frank with you, it has never occurred to me that you could care one pin whether I thought kindly

of you or not. Why should you want me to forgive you?"

"Don't speak so coldly!" cried Ianthe, her tears now falling fast. "You will break my heart, Guy. It is broken already, I think."

"And who broke it?" returned Guy, with grave irony.

Ianthe sobbed, and said nothing.

"Come," resumed Guy, more kindly, "I don't think you have very much to reproach me with. If you are unhappy, it was certainly not I who made you so. But if we are to go back upon the past, there was a time, the very last time we met, when you made me unhappier than I had ever imagined possible. For months, as you know, I had been in love with you. It was a fool's paradise, for I believed that you loved me as well. Suddenly, and without warning, you

turned into a block of ice. What the reason was I never could discover. But, whatever it may have been, you treated me barbarously, Ianthe. You tortured me in my very tenderest point, laughing in my face as you did it, while I would have died for you. Looking back upon it to-day, after the lapse of three years, I tell you that your conduct was as truculent as it was inexplicable. Are you sorry for it now? I hope you are. O Ianthe, how could you find it in your heart to serve me so? Why did you do it, Ianthe —why did you do it?"

This little outburst of feeling on Guy's part had a wonderfully consoling effect upon Ianthe.

"Listen, dear Guy," she said, softly, putting her hand upon his arm. "I can at any rate explain my conduct, even if I can't excuse it. Do you remember my

telling you that if you let anything interfere with your coming back to St. Mary's after the Long Vacation I should try and kill my love for you?"

"Yes, I remember it," said Guy.

"Well," continued Ianthe, "I never doubted you for a moment. I felt as sure that you would brave my husband's threats as that the sun would rise next day, and for a whole week I was as happy as my circumstances permitted. I felt so proud of your love and of your constancy, Guy; it was a priceless possession that I could hug all to myself in secret, and which even my husband could not take away. Then came that dreadful day—the day of our luncheon-party. Mr. Danvers lunched with us, and just before we rose from the table he told us, quite calmly, that you had imparted to him your intention of not returning after the Long. My

heart stopped beating. I shot a furtive glance at my husband, whose face wore a smile of amused complacency that half-maddened me. 'Ah,' he said, 'I knew a week ago that he wasn't likely to be up again.' Nobody made any remark, and the subject dropped. Soon afterwards, just as we were starting for the garden-party, my husband came to where I was. He was very gentle. 'You see how it is,' he said with more kindness than he had shown me for weeks. 'The young man is wiser than you would have him be, and finds that second thoughts are best. He is not worth grieving over, my dear.' There was something in the way he said this, more than in the words themselves, which appealed to me. I felt furiously angry with you, and imagined that my anger had killed my love; an insane delusion, of course, for it was a

proof how invincibly strong my love really was. So I kissed him, and said I would be guided by him in future. And then, when I saw you at the gardens, my anger was so hot still that I had no difficulty in playing my new part. I thought I did not care for you any more, and I actually enjoyed wreaking my revenge upon you—revenge for your treachery towards me, as I supposed. I would not believe your story of some reason you could not give; it sounded empty and made up. At last you went away, and then an awful revulsion of feeling came over me, and I would have given my soul to call you back."

She stopped suddenly, with a deep, long-drawn sigh. Guy looked at her for a moment, touched in spite of himself, but did not speak. Then she said:

"If you knew what my punishment has been, you would forgive me, Guy. Of

course I heard all about it afterwards,—the reason you had to leave—and my remorse was almost unbearable. I longed to write to you, but——"

"To my mind," interrupted Guy, "your explanation is even more inexplicable than your conduct towards me. What! You say you loved me, and yet, in a fit of temper, you sent me about my business? You loved me, and yet refused to listen to what I had to say? You saw me miserable, and instead of helping me to bear my burden you tortured me with cruel words? You were miserable yourself at my supposed defection, and yet you shut yourself out from the comfort it was in my power to offer you? Are all women like you at heart?"

"I cannot make it clearer to you," answered Ianthe, with a sob. "You are a man, and men never understand women.

We act from different motives altogether; we're illogical and inconsistent, but we can't help it—it's a question of impulse with us, not of reason. I told you years ago, in that far-off, happy past, that I should spoil your life, Guy. Do you remember? It was on that blessed afternoon by the river-side—ah! I cannot bear to think of it. Yet I little thought how wilfully and wickedly I should work the fulfilment of my own prophecy."

"It is your own life that you have spoilt, Ianthe," said Guy, gravely. "Forgive you? Yes, I forgive you freely. You are not looking well—you're thin and pale, and look as though you had suffered. Come, try to forget the past. It is irrevocable, and there's nothing to be gained by brooding over what might have been. You are still young, and much happiness may lie in store for you.

Only, another time, don't play so recklessly with a man's heart. It's worth something—too much, at any rate, to be lightly thrown away."

They walked twice the length of the lawn without speaking. Then Ianthe, who had been struggling with a certain diffidence, said, hesitatingly:

"But when you say you forgive me, Guy, what do you mean by it? Do you mean that it will be possible to blot out that day as though it had never existed, and—and—be once more to one another—what we were—before?"

Guy started, and paused a minute.

"Three years bring many changes with them, Ianthe," he said, gently. "They seem to have brought a change of some sort to you," laying his hand upon her black dress. "You are in mourning."

"Yes—did you not know?" returned

Ianthe, surprised. "Ah, I forgot. My husband died a few months ago. I am free, Guy, now."

"The Professor dead!" exclaimed Guy, rather shocked. "Poor man! I'm afraid I behaved very badly to him. It was wrong of us, Ianthe, now one comes to think of it."

She turned white to the lips. If *that* was all Guy could think of to say on hearing that she was free to marry him at last, her chance was indeed a poor one.

Still, she could not give him up. She was alone in the world now; not friendless, nor yet entirely penniless; but she felt very desolate, and was paying a heavy price for the caprice and wilfulness of that bright day in June three years ago. To marry Guy was the great object of her life now, and it was with this in view that,

having obtained a clue to his whereabouts, she had tracked him down.

"Yes, it was wrong," she replied, softly; "but then the temptation was irresistible. I never really loved my husband, Guy; indeed, I did not even know what love meant, when I married him. It was only when I met you that the revelation came."

"I wonder whether he felt the difference," remarked Guy, thoughtfully.

She could have struck him for his apathy. Had he no thought, no word, for *her?*

"I am sorry," resumed Guy, "very sorry indeed. It is a sad affair. When did you leave St. Mary's?"

"When he died," replied Ianthe.

"Ah, he died there, then, did he?" said Guy. "It is strange how little I know what has been going on at St. Mary's

since I left. Used you to see anything of Cecil Urquhart?"

Ianthe flushed angrily.

"No," she said, "I never met him. He was always an enemy to me, Guy; I knew it from the first. I used to feel instinctively that he tried to set you against me. I suppose you are very much together still?"

"Yes, we often see each other," answered Guy, with a fleeting smile. "He is going in for science."

The conversation flagged again for a few moments. Guy began to feel ever so slightly bored, and wondered how it was that Ianthe seemed so different from his remembrance of her. Where was the glamour, the halo, that was wont to surround her in his eyes? Where was the thrill of ecstasy that once permeated every nerve in his body when in her

presence? How was it he felt so calm, so unconcerned, so cold?

Then she spoke again.

"Guy," she said; and stopped.

"Yes?" said he, uncomfortably.

"Supposing," she continued, slowly and with effort, "that I had curbed my jealousy and disappointment that day, and had been as loving to you as before; supposing I had never shown any distrust; supposing, in short, I had received you as you expected me to, and that no breach had ever taken place between us; what terms should we be on to-day?"

Guy hesitated.

"It is difficult to say what course our lives might have run," he said, at last. "Probably we should have kept up our old relations. But where's the good of thinking about that now? The past is irrevocable, Ianthe."

"But the present?" she whispered, breathlessly.

"The present!" echoed Guy, with a rush of pity. "There is nothing I wouldn't do to make your life happier," he cried. "You are looking wretched, and it goes to my heart to see you. But what *can* I do? Can one resuscitate the dead? Can one live on memories? We had our romance, Ianthe, and a very pleasant one it was. Yes, I remember that afternoon on the river as well as you do. It was a day of days to me. One scarcely lives a day like that twice over."

"Oh, why not?" cried Ianthe, clutching at her last chance. "See, Guy, there is a boat close by. Let us get into it. Let us row up the lake. Guy—dearest, dearest Guy—be kind to me! Let us try and renew that happy time, that

golden hour, when—Oh, we *can* live it twice over. We will. Come, Guy, come. Let us blot out the memory of the last three years; let them be to us as though they had never been. How beautiful the world is! Look at the sunshine, Guy; there's not a cloud in the air. And I am free — quite free — to love you without sin."

"Hush! for God's sake," uttered Guy, hoarsely. An inexpressible compassion welled up in his heart, and his eyes grew soft and dim as he looked into hers. She had stabbed him viciously once, but he bore her no malice. Now he found himself forced to return the blow, but there was no triumph in his heart, no vengeful joy, nothing but the very deepest pity.

"What? Why?" said Ianthe, the fate of her whole life trembling before her eyes.

"What you desire can never be," said Guy, with lips as pale as hers. "God bless you always, Ianthe! But——"

She strained nearer to him, and her breath came quick and short.

"——I am on my wedding tour."

THE END.

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